

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS



CAT'S PRIZED CATCH 2008 is the Year of the Rat, which begins the 12-year cycle of the Chinese zodiac. According to legend, the Rat centuries ago won a race among the animals besting even the faster Ox and the Horse simply by

being clever. The Rat jumped on the back of the Ox and jumped off its head before it could cross the finish line. Those born in the Year of the Rat are quick-witted and disarming but tend to be greedy.

EDWIN BACASMAS

Ping stands in Erap way

Lacson says definitely he will run

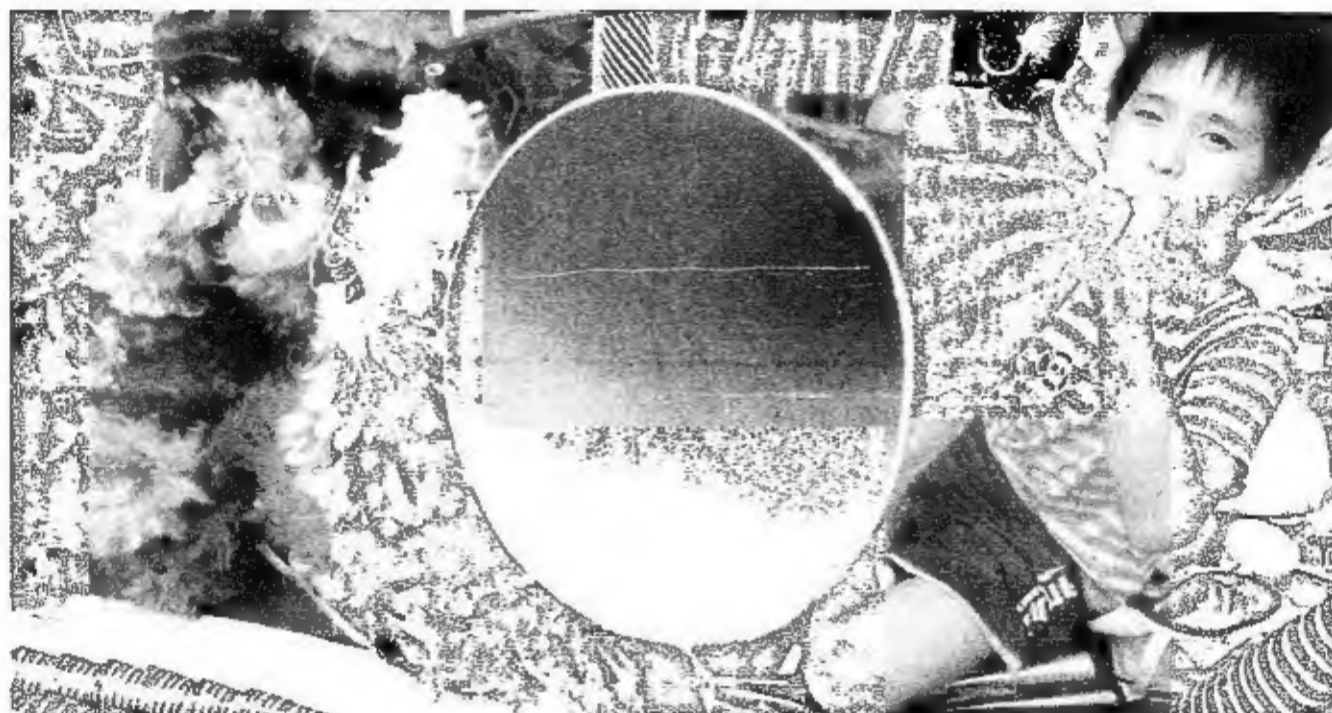
By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

SEN. PANFILO LACSON HAS expressed his intention to seek the country's highest elective post in 2010, putting him on a collision course with three other opposition leaders who have made known their plans to run for president—Senate President Manuel Villar, Sen. Mar Roxas and deposed President Joseph Estrada.

"My own decision to run in 2010 will depend on three considerations—intent, means and opportunity. If you ask me if I have the intention, the answer is yes," Lacson said yesterday.

He said he would "definitely go for it" should "all three present themselves

PING STANDS/A4



SAFE BUT SOUND Made of cardboard and plastic, these blow horns sold along a sidewalk of Carriedo Street, Manila, and all throughout the country for that matter, can sound off with all your mind and heart to bid 2007 farewell and to embrace a brand new year, and yet keep you safe and sound.

RYAN LIM

Trillanes caper tops inquirer.net most read stories; Dollywood No. 1 column

THE REVOLT STAGED BY SEN. ANTONIO Trillanes IV, a former Navy lieutenant, at the Peninsula Manila hotel in Makati on Nov. 29 and the Chinese teen who killed himself when a blind date turned out to be unattractive topped this year's Most Read Stories on inquirer.net.

Dollywood, which reports on the doings in the entertainment and show business world, emerged as the Most Read

Column in 2007.

The Top 10 Overall Most Read Stories and Top 10 Overall Columns on inquirer.net for 2007:

1. Trillanes, Lim arrested; Makati standoff ends (Nov. 29, 2007)

Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV and Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim seized the Peninsula Manila hotel and held it for seven hours to demand the resignation of President

Macapagal-Arroyo. Trillanes and his group of renegade soldiers surrendered after loyal troops surrounded the hotel, threw tear gas and drove an armored personnel carrier into the lobby in preparation for an assault. The standoff was preceded by a walk-out by the Trillanes group from a court hearing where they were being tried for their involvement in

TRILLANES/A6

Filipino healing priest does so 'many miracles like in Bible'

By Ma. Ceres P. Doyo

HE COULD NOT BELIEVE HIS healing power. He wanted to run away from it.

A Canadian woman declared dead eight hours earlier, her organs ready to be harvested and donated, suddenly opened her eyes after Filipino priest Fr. Fernando Suarez prayed over her.

Suarez, who was then a seminarian, was stunned. "Let me out of here," was all he could say, ready to flee.

He was supposed to go and see the woman earlier but he was not able to make it in time. When he arrived at the Ottawa Civic Hospital in Canada, it seemed too late. But Suarez went to see her anyway and, surrounded by

doctors whom he requested to be present, he prayed over the woman.

The miracle happened.

The woman is now well, Suarez says, and has resumed her normal life.

That case, which happened almost nine years ago, is probably the most stunning of all, but Suarez

FILIPINO/A15



SUAREZ: The gift has been with him for more than 20 years.

Pray for, be kind to all God's animals, Church urged

By Tessa R. Salazar

START THE NEW YEAR WITH A compassionate eye for animals, animal welfare groups have appealed to members of the Catholic Church.

After all, they reason, animals were the only ones with the Holy Family when Jesus was born in a manger.

The People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (Peta), the Animal Welfare Coalition (an umbrella organization of 21 groups nationwide and two groups from the United Kingdom) and the Philippine Animal Welfare Society (PAWS) are calling on Catholic bishops and priests to include compassion for animals in their New Year homilies to the faithful.

The animal welfare groups stress that people should reduce

PRAY FOR/A15

Word power opens doors for poor boy

By Kristine L. Alave

AT 11, MATTHEW MALITAO looks small for his age—he can easily pass for an eight-year-old—but he knows more words than college students normally would and has enough ammo in his linguistic arsenal to slay giants in the Scrabble world.

His favorite words are deasil and equinias, among other terms

WORD/A4

Doronila regrets offending Manalo son in column

INQUIRER COLUMNIST AMANDO Doronila yesterday expressed regret that he offended Eduardo V. Manalo, son of Iglesia ni Cristo head Bishop Efraim Manalo, when he said in a Page 1 article on May 7, 2001, that the authorities had identified the hotel rooms and suites in which several people, including the younger Manalo, had reportedly met during the three days of the "Ed-

DORONILA/A6

ISANG TULDOK LANG AYOS!



At last, House goes hi-tech with biometrics

By Christian V. Esguerra

WHEN MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF Representatives return to work four weeks from now, they'll be in for a "hi-tech" reception.

The House leadership is installing equipment for "biometric voting" to replace the traditional means by which

AT LAST/A4

Bhutto's son seen as too young to be mother's successor

ISLAMABAD—BENAZIR BHUTTO's party was to discuss a successor to the slain Pakistani opposition leader on Sunday and decide whether to contest an election due in little over a week, as controversy swirled about just how Bhutto died.

Without the charismatic Bhutto, 54, whose family dynasty's history is intertwined with Pakistan's, her party is in disarray.

Bhutto's 19-year-old son, Bilawal, is to read her will on Sunday but even if it names him as

her political successor, the Oxford law student is seen as too young to immediately lead, and her widower Asif Ali Zardari would likely be the de facto chief.

Otherwise, the choice of a successor most likely lies be-

tween Zardari, and her top aide, Makhdoom Anis Fahim.

Bhutto's husband Zardari can ooze charm, and gained respect for enduring eight years in jail before being released without being convicted. However, political foes accuse him of cor-

ruption and some loyalists in Bhutto's party, the Pakistan People's Party, blame him for tainting the Bhutto name.

Many PPP leaders are from Bhutto's land-owning feudal class, yet the party also has a big

BHUTTO'S/A6

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Northern and Eastern Luzon will experience cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers. The rest of Luzon will have partly cloudy to cloudy skies with light passing rains. The rest of the country will have partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms.

Major Metro Partly Cloudy	Minor/Isolated	Partly Cloudy
Baguio Partly Cloudy	Davao	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao Cloudy with Rains	Davao	Partly Cloudy
Laoag Cloudy with Rains	Tandaban	Partly Cloudy
Clark Zone Partly Cloudy	San Jose	Partly Cloudy
Tagaytay Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Partly Cloudy
Laguna Cloudy with Rains	Surigao del Sur	Partly Cloudy
Cebu Partly Cloudy	Davao	Partly Cloudy

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Second FRONT PAGE

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EZ2

10 29

(In exact order)

Mid-Day SUERTRES Evening

9 2 8 9 2 7

SUPERLOTTO 6/49

12 25 28 29 45 47

P50,468,706.00

2 more prison officials suspended

Told to reply to charges in connection with Jalosjos escape

By Leila Salaverria

THE ESCAPE OF CONVICTED child rapist Romeo Jalosjos has claimed more official casualties as the justice department has placed the head of the New Bilibid Prisons and another Bureau of Corrections (BuCor) official under preventive suspension for 90 days.

NBP Supt. Juanito Leopando and Teodora Diaz, chief of the BuCor's administrative division, were also asked to answer in writing in 72 hours the charges of dishonesty and grave misconduct or neglect in the performance of duty against them, according to Justice Undersecretary Fidel Exconde Jr.

The charges are punishable with removal from the service.

Exconde said the charge sheet and preventive suspension orders were issued on the instructions of Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez. They were transmitted to the offices of Leopando and Diaz late Saturday, with immediate effect. The two are to be replaced by their deputies or those second in command.

Exconde said preventive suspension was not a penalty yet, and the investigation of Leopando and Diaz would continue.

He said the orders were issued only on Saturday because the DOJ had to check the documentary evidence of Jalosjos' escape.

BuCor Director Ricardo Daplat was sacked and replaced by re-

tired national police chief Oscar Calderon after Jalosjos escaped.

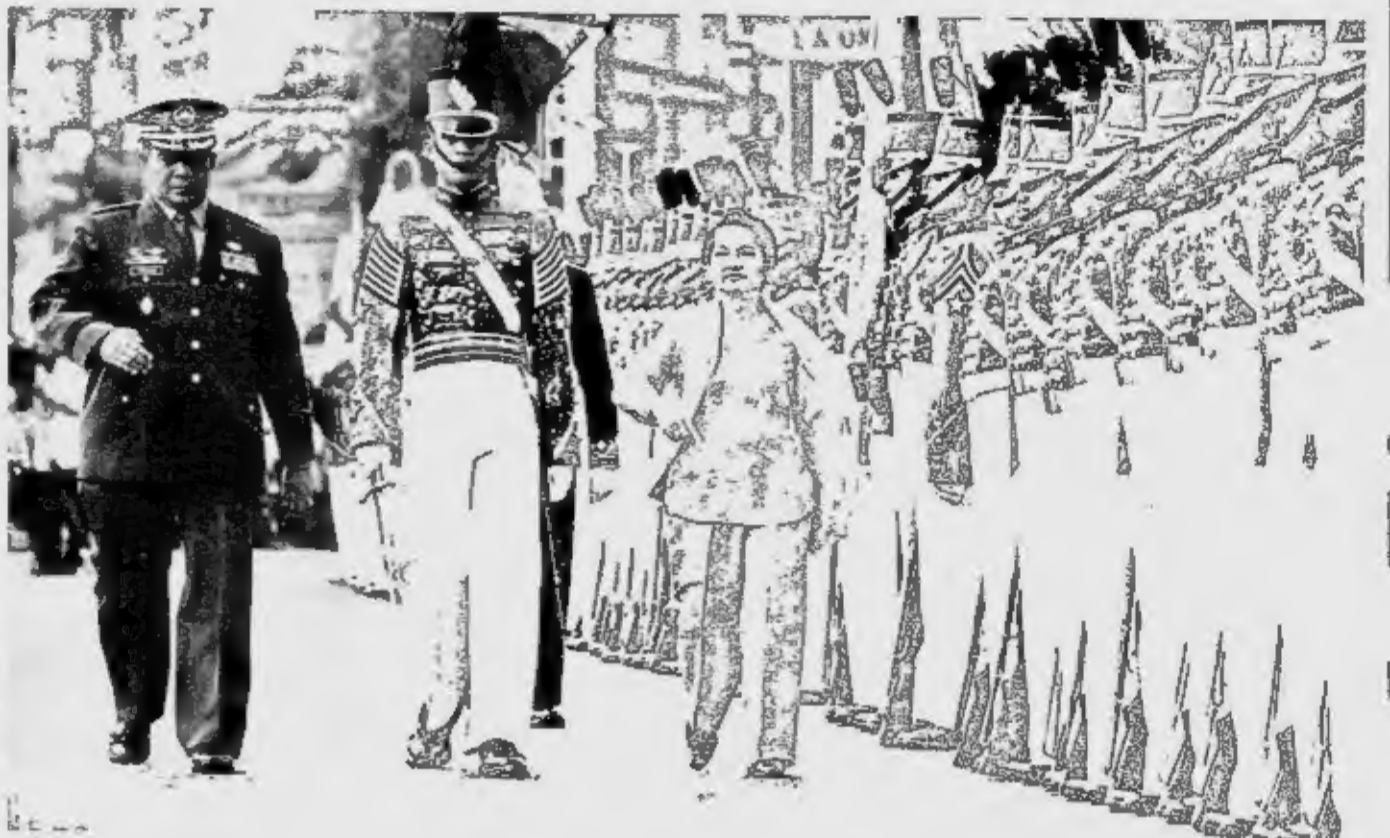
In the charge sheet against Leopando signed by Exconde, the NBP chief was accused of signing or issuing on Dec. 16 a release order in favor of Jalosjos, despite the fact that BuCor has since June a request pending before the justice department asking for guidance on the recomputation of Jalosjos' good conduct time allowance.

It said that the Department of Justice had recalled the release order on Dec. 19, but that the order was released to the media which enabled the former congressman from Zamboanga del Norte to walk out of jail a free man on Dec. 22.

"There was subsequently the precipitate and unauthorized leakage of the order to the media which created confusion and undermined the confidence in a critical pillar of the criminal justice system, and the eventual escape of inmate Romeo Jalosjos from the New Bilibid Prisons," the charge sheet stated.

The charge sheet against Diaz narrated the same facts and also stated that it was she who had custody of BuCor records and documents, particularly the release order on Jalosjos.

In a phone interview, Exconde said that before a release order can be issued, it has to be backed by a memorandum from the BuCor stating that several documents supporting the release were being issued.



RIZAL DAY RITES

President Macapagal-Arroyo marches with Armed Forces chief of staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon during yesterday's observance of the 111th year of martyrdom of the country's national hero, Dr. Jose P. Rizal, in San Fernando, La Union.

LYN RILLON

QUESTION FROM PEASANTS

What gains is Palparan talking about?

By TJ Burgonio

A MILITANT PEASANT group yesterday twitted retired Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan for saying the INQUIRER had been remiss in reporting the gains of his anti-insurgency campaign when he was in the military service.

"What good results is Palparan talking about? Everywhere he goes all the results he gives are more human rights abuses, torture, abductions and killings," said Willy Marbella, internal deputy secretary of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP).

"Is he saying it is all right to commit all these atrocities so he can free businessmen and local government units from so-called communist control?" Marbella said.

Palparan, portrayed by the Left as a "butcher" responsible for abducting and killing activists in areas where he had been assigned, retired from the

Armed Forces of the Philippines this year. He is now a consultant to administration-allied Rep. Prospero Nograles of Davao.

In an INQUIRER story last week, Palparan complained the newspaper focused mainly on his alleged violation of human rights instead of the gains made by his campaign against communist insurgents.

He voiced his disappointment with the paper after the Court of Appeals issued a writ of amparo in favor of brothers Raymond and Reynaldo Manalo, who had alleged that they were abducted and detained by Palparan and his troops for 18 months in Bulacan, Nueva Ecija and Pangasinan.

The human rights group Karapatan has counted 887 victims of extrajudicial killings, including 395 militants, from 2001 to the present.

KMP praised the media, including the INQUIRER, for reporting human rights violations "as best they can."

WHAT'S INSIDE

■ **TINY 'CRACKER'** prompts DOH to issue warning /A5

■ **TOUGHER JAIL** term on election violence OKd /A3

■ **LUNG CENTER** exec ordered dismissed /A9

■ **LIM MOVED** back to PNP jail /A5

DECEMBER IS NATIONAL ENERGY CONSCIOUSNESS MONTH

HUWAG HAYAANG IKAW ANG PINAPANOOD NG TELEBISYON

UGALINGI HOE ITO KUNG MAYIBANG GINAGAWA
AT HINDI RINE LANG NANONOOD NITO

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		Tilapia	P60-80
		Galunggong	P80-120
		Kamatis	P40-60
		Pechay	P20-45
		Sitaw	P45-60
		Talong	P28-60
		Presyo sa palengke sa Metro Manila.	

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SOURCE: DA-Bureau of Agricultural Statistics

Watching fireworks?
Here's what to do

TO PROTECT YOUR EYE-sight, just watch the fire-works from a distance.

Eye specialist Dr. Jack Arroyo issued this advice as Pilipinos prepare to welcome the New Year with the bang and lights of fireworks displays.

Arroyo, president of the American Eye Center, in a statement Saturday, said that families who will be watching the New Year revelry on Dec. 31 should just watch the fire-work displays from afar lest they want their eyes to be exposed to possible damage.

He warned that wearing prescription glasses provide little protection against a

number of eye injuries which could possibly be caused by fireworks.

Arroyo said fireworks, when handled closely by non-professionals, exposes the eye to toxic fumes, chemicals and flying debris.

He said among the most common firecrackers-related eye injuries are contusion eyeball, traumatic iritis, eyelid lacerations, corneal foreign body and corneal abrasions.

Also thermal injuries can be caused by the ultraviolet light of fireworks. But the worst possible danger, he added, is a ruptured eyeball.

Beverly T. Natividad

Bill setting 20-year jail term
on poll violence approved

By Christian V. Esguerra

CAN A NEW, 20-YEAR PRISON term finally discourage politicians from employing violence to win elections?

No one can really tell, but a new bill passed on third and final reading by the House of Representatives shortly before its holiday break hopes to do the trick.

Albay Rep. Edcel Lagman's House Bill No. 1882 jacks up to a maximum of 20 years election offenses "attended by violence, coercion, intimidation, force, or threats," a penalty equivalent to

prison temporal under the Revised Penal Code.

"The employment of violence is the most brutal and unfortunately effective means of thwarting the will of the electorate, eliminating poll rivals and silencing witnesses," Lagman said in a statement.

"The use of violence or terrorism does not only tamper with election results; it decimates the essence and spirit of the electoral process."

Consolidated with two related bills filed by Cagayan de Oro Rep. Rufus Rodriguez, the measure also punishes political par-

ties, including party-list groups, whose member would be found guilty of the offense.

The penalty increases the current fine of P10,000 to a minimum of P500,000.

On top of the fine, the offender will be disqualified perpetually from holding public office and will no longer be allowed to cast his vote.

Lagman said his measure also "provides for the separate and concurrent prosecution of a person accused of an election offense or prohibited act under the Omnibus Election Code whose act or acts likewise con-

stitute a felony under the Revised Penal Code."

Lagman said the importance of its passage had been "overshadowed" by more controversial measures that preoccupied media reports toward the congressional Christmas break.

Weeks before the break, the focus was on the passage of the Cheaper Medicines Bill, which promised to drastically lower the prices of drugs sold here.

One strategy was "parallel importation," a salient feature of the versions of the bill in the Senate and in the lower cham-

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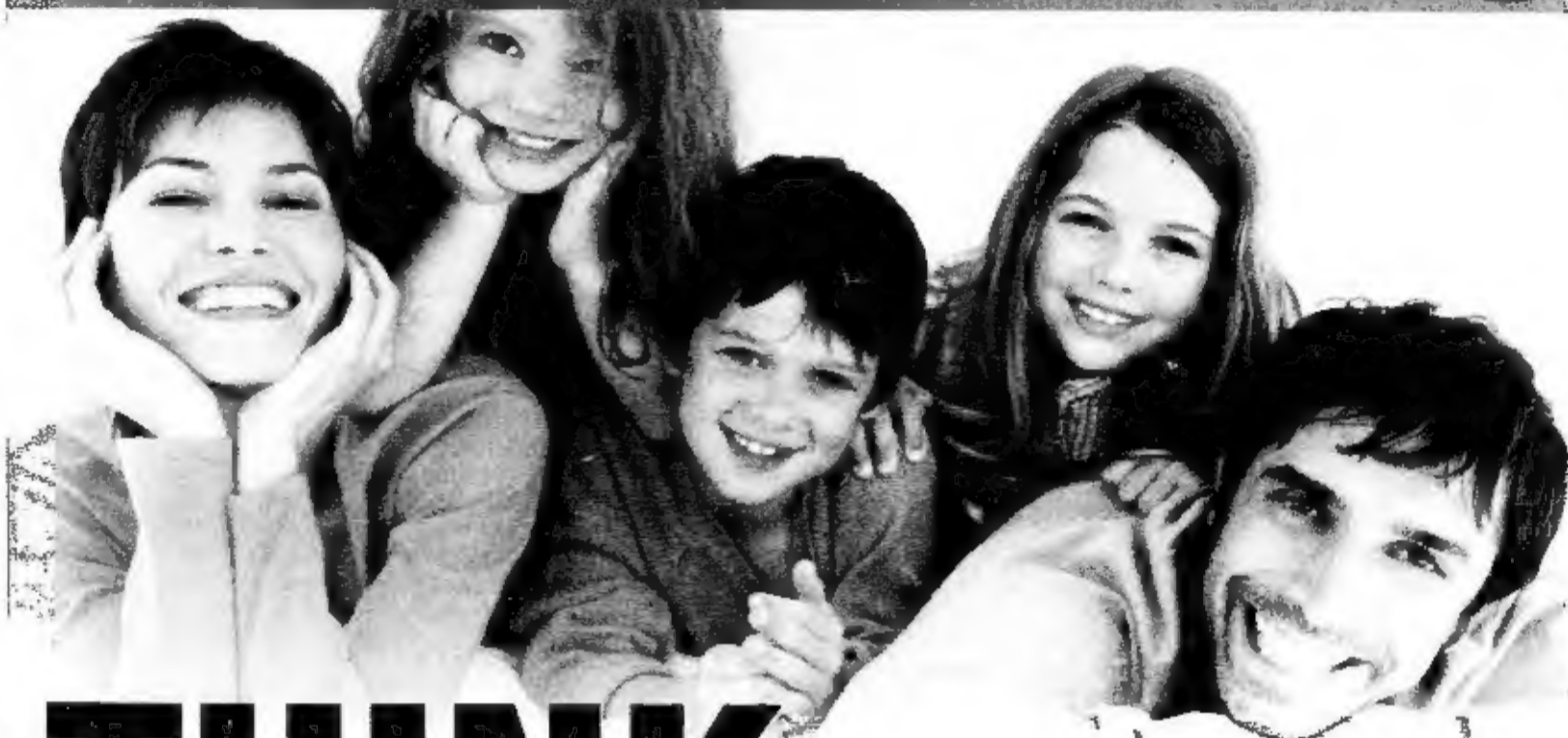


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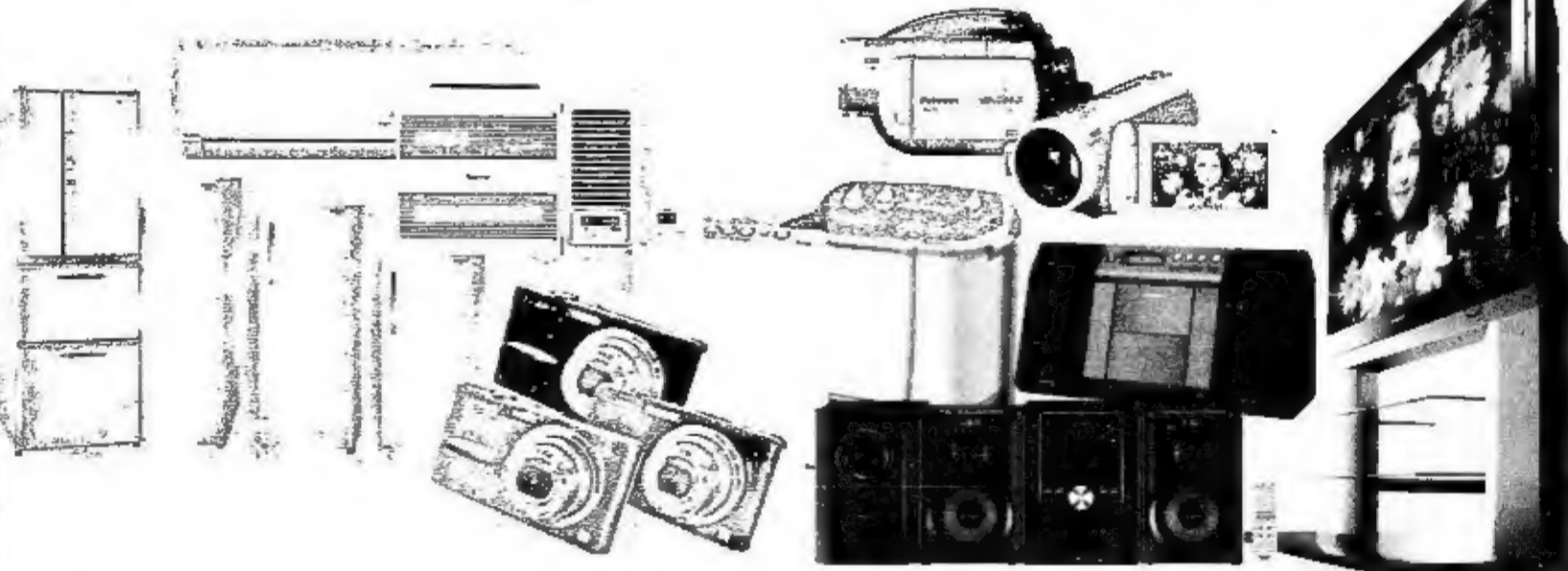


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Panasonic ideas for life



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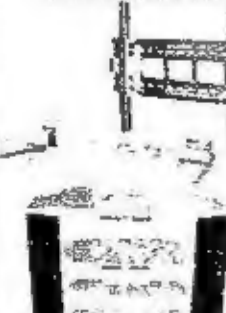
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Palace: It's still too early to pick bet for 2010 polls

By Christine O. Avendaño

SERGIO APOSTOL, CHIEF PRESIDENTIAL legal counsel, yesterday said that it was still "too early" for the Arroyo administration to choose its standard-bearer for the 2010 presidential election.

"The President is not even talking politics," Apostol said.

But he said that the ruling administration coalition, Lakas-CMD, would hold a meeting in the second week of January "to start exploring who will be our candidate" for 2010.

This early among the possible presidential candidates in Lakas are Bayani Fernando, head of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority, and Quezon City Mayor Jose Belmonte, according to Apostol.

Among administration allies,

those who could run for president are Vice President Noli de Castro and Sen. Richard Gordon, the President's chief legal counsel said.

The Lakas meeting will be presided over by Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr., coalition president.

Apostol said President Macapagal-Arroyo, Lakas chair emeritus, "could" join the meeting.

Apostol said deposed President Joseph Estrada could not seek the presidency because the Constitution prohibits an elected president from seeking the

same post again.

Apostol said Estrada probably thought he could run again because the presidential pardon given him restored his political rights.

Ms Arroyo's counsel said that the pardon was an unconditional one.

Ping stands in Erap way, will definitely go for it

From page A1

at the proper time."

With his image as a self-styled crime fighter, Lacson believes he has a fighting chance considering his favorable ranking in surveys and focus group discussions, and the means to undertake a national campaign. He has run twice for senator and once for president.

Lacson made public his desire to be the country's next head of state a day after Estrada said that he would run again for president if the opposition failed to come up with a common standard-bearer against the candidate of the Arroyo administration.

Estrada said he didn't want a repeat of the 2004 presidential election that saw Ms Arroyo winning over her strongest rival, Fernando Poe Jr.

Estrada claimed that Poe, his close friend and fellow actor, lost because Lacson also ran for president, dividing the anti-Arroyo votes.

Unfair treatment

Lacson said Estrada was well within his rights to run for public office, subject to constitutional and legal restrictions.

But he denied Estrada's claim that he played the "spoiler's role" in 2004.

"I was more of a victim of injustice and unfair treatment by my former party, LDP (Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino). It was out of self-respect that I rejected calls to withdraw even resisting some very tempting offers from the FPJ camp such as reimbursement of campaign expenses, Cabinet posts for myself and members of my campaign staff, and [my] anointment in 2010,"



LOVE, ALWAYS. ERAP That is what's written on the bags of goodies that ex-President Estrada has been distributing in a frenzy of gift-giving the past days in the city's poor areas like Basaco, Tondo, on Sunday. (PHILIPINO)

said Lacson.

Hello Garci

That the President [Ms Arroyo] was determined to win "at all costs" should have settled the matter, according to Lacson.

"The myth that I split our votes and spelled the defeat of the opposition has already been shattered by the 'Hello Garci' tape controversy that clearly suggests cheating and victory at all costs by Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo whether we were united or not," he said.

Tall order

Chief Presidential Legal Counsel Sergio Apostol said it would be a tall order to unite the opposition because some of the presidential aspirants were

already campaigning this early.

"They have already made up their minds," Apostol said.

Villar and Roxas have been touted as the front-runners for the 2010 elections as both have been rebuilding their respective political parties—the Nacionalista and Liberal—in preparation for their run for the presidency.

Other opposition leaders the United Opposition (UNO) identified as possible presidential aspirants were Senators Loren Legarda and Francis Escudero, and Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay.

Playing coy

Escudero has remained coy about his plans. "Erap meant well when he said that. He genuinely wants the opposition to

unite," the junior senator said, refusing to confirm whether he had any intention of running for president in 2010.

"It's too far away to talk about 2010," said Escudero in a text message.

Interviewed by reporters in Tacloban City, Binay also played coy about his plans for 2010. But he dropped hints that local officials like him could very well serve the entire country as he boasted of his accomplishments as mayor. (See story at right.)

Unite behind one candidate

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. shared the view that Estrada could run for president if the opposition failed to unite.



LACSON: I'm not the spoiler.

"The opposition should unite behind one bet even though it looks hard. Cory (Aquino) became the unified opposition bet to defeat Marcos. Otherwise, Erap (Estrada) would probably sacrifice his new tranquility and plunge anew into a tumultuous political life," said Pimentel in a text message to the Inquirer.

Estrada, who was convicted of plunder in September, claimed that he could run again for president because his political rights were restored when President Macapagal-Arroyo pardoned him in October.

His term as president that started in the middle of 1998 was cut short by people power in January 2001.

An election lawyer and a poll commissioner believe that Estrada as a former president is barred from running for another term. But former Sen. Ernesto Maceda, an UNO leader, said it would be up to the Supreme Court to decide the matter. With reports from and Christine O. Avendaño in Manila and Joey A. Gabieta, Inquirer Visayas

What's Binay doing in Tacloban?

By Joey A. Gabieta
Inquirer Visayas

TACLOBAN CITY—IS MAKATI City Mayor Jejomar Binay starting to test the political waters for the presidential race in 2010?

Political observers raised this question after Binay and his staff gave indications that his visit here yesterday was not just to take part in the city's commemoration of Jose Rizal's martyrdom.

Binay, interviewed by reporters here, played it coy on his political plans for 2010 but dropped hints that local officials like him could very well serve the whole country.

Binay, an invited guest at the program to commemorate the 111th death anniversary of the country's national hero, said the 2010 presidential election was still "too far off" for him to really consider it seriously.

"There is time for that," Binay said, when asked his plans three years from now.

He, however, was quick to say that his visit here and to other parts of the country had nothing to do with the 2010 presidential election.

Binay said his visits to places outside Makati were by virtue of the invitations that he had received and his involvement in different organizations like the Rotary Club and the Boys Scout of the Philippines, of which he is the national president.

Binay was welcomed to this city by former Tacloban mayor Alfredo O. Romualdez and the current officer in charge, Sergio Sumayod.

At last, House goes hi-tech with biometric voting in next session

From page A1

the country's 240 representatives cast their votes on pieces of legislation.

The new technology, already commonplace in many parliaments elsewhere, will allow lawmakers to vote by simply pressing the buttons "yes," "no" or "abstain," according to Deputy Minority Leader Roilo Golez.

The vote will later be verified using the individual fingerprints of the members of the House. The results will be

flashed on a screen to be installed at the plenary hall.

Speed and accuracy

Golez said the same technology would be used during roll call, a procedure that often ate up valuable minutes of plenary work.

"The beauty of this new technology is in its speed and accuracy," the Parañaque lawmaker told the Inquirer.

Biometrics refers to "automated methods of recognizing a person based on a physiological or behavioral characteristic,"

says the website of the US-based The Biometric Consortium.

"Biometric technologies are becoming the foundation of an extensive array of highly secure identification and personal verification solutions," the consortium said.

Fingerprint scanner

"As the level of security breaches and transaction fraud increases, the need for highly secure identification and personal verification technologies is becoming ap-

parent," it said.

In the case of the House of Representatives, each of the gadgets, which would go with a fingerprint scanner, will be installed on every lawmaker's table at the session hall.

The installation was the reason the House leadership decided to move the resumption of legislative work from Jan. 21 to Jan. 28.

Golez said the biometric voting system, reportedly costing P15 million, would be put to better use during voting on

third reading.

Speeches

At this stage, he noted that the common "nominal" voting—especially on controversial measures—was often long and arduous because each of the lawmakers had the option to explain his or her vote.

The problem with snail-paced voting was also apparent in the 13th Congress when the majority in the chamber voted to kill two impeachment complaints against President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Many of the members of the House then spent a significant amount of time delivering impassioned speeches to explain their votes.

"To me, the new system is very welcome considering that we are a very large body with 240 members," Golez said. "It will cure the problem with accuracy."

With the coming of new technology to the lower house, he said the body would apparently need to incorporate the biometric voting system in its rules.

Word power opens doors for poor boy through Scrabble tournaments

From page A1

that do not appear in online dictionaries but are accepted in Scrabble. In competitions, he usually plays the game standing up so he could reach across the table and place tiles on the farthest side of the board.

The National Association for Scrabble in the Philippines (Nasap) currently ranks Matthew, son of a tricycle driver juggling a depressed area in Quezon City, as the No. 2 Filipino player under the age of 17. He ranks just below another QC-based word-math, Louie de Guzman, 16.

Somewhere happy

In an interview with the Inquirer, Matthew said the game simply takes him to somewhere "happy," where letters "swim" in his mind. His favorite words may not always be high scoring, but he said he likes them because they are "deep."

Among the words Matthew played during his last tournament—the 1st Philippine Scrabble Open held at the SM Megamall from Dec. 27 to 28—were "zowie," "doggies," "reliance," and "stonier."

Matthew actually lost almost half of his 15 games, but created enough buzz in the local

Scrabble circuit during the two-day competition to be considered a "killer" player at his age and somebody to be reckoned with a few years from now.

Nasap president Robert Rubina said Matthew could have topped the World Youth Tournament held in Malaysia in November had he been able to compete there. (The boy was all set to go on his first-ever overseas trip but it was canceled because of lack of funds.)

The emergent word wonder, who started to play Scrabble at age 8, managed to build a staggering vocabulary while growing up in a poor neighborhood in Barangay Mangahan in Commonwealth, Quezon City.

Healthy appetite for words

Matthew is a sixth grader at Manuel Luis Elementary School, while his sister, 14-year-old Traci, who is another Scrabble whiz, goes to Commonwealth National High School.

Their father Jun Malitao is a tricycle driver; mother Shirley tends a small sari-sari store.

He was introduced to Scrabble in Barangay Mangahan when it held a Scrabble contest three years ago.

The couple observed that their two kids' hearty appetite for



POOR BOY ENRICHED BY WORDS Matthew Malitao memorizes the dictionary and the World List every day. He lives in a depressed area in Quezon City but dreams of getting out with his family by becoming a professional scrabble player.

words has not only made them formidable competitors; since they started playing the game, the Malitao siblings have sharply improved their grades in school, their parents said.

Matthew was in the lowest section when he enrolled in Grade I. Five years later, he has not only landed in the top section but has also entered the honor roll.

"(Matthew's) spelling and English-speaking skills improved. He's now best in English (in his class)," according

to his father, himself a Scrabble enthusiast.

"And when he comes home from school, it's all Scrabble," the father said. When not playing against each other, Matthew and Traci can be found leafing through either "The Word List" (a bible for words accepted in Scrabble) or a thick dictionary in their spare time.

London, here they come

The Malitao siblings said they want to qualify for the next Youth

Tournament in London in 2008.

But dreaming beyond that goal, Matthew, who also wants to be a pilot, said he hopes that by winning future Scrabble tournaments as a "professional" he could add to the family's earnings.

For now, his parents are thankful that their kids are hooked on something worthwhile. Scrabble, they said, has nurtured their children's ambition.

As to last week's Open,

though, both father and son admitted it was not Matthew's time to win big just yet.

"Masama daw yung gising niya (He apparently woke up on the wrong side of the bed)," the elder Malitao said, noting how his son repeatedly drew "useless" tiles and couldn't get enough pieces for a bingo, Scrabble jargon for a seven-letter word.

Matthew then lost a close match against 19-year-old Gerson Antimaro from Cebu. He said he "misplaced" a "u" tile that allowed Antimaro to form "rup" and win by a mere 15-point margin.

Killer on square board

Antimaro conceded after the match, though, that Matthew was a tough opponent who just had a spell of "bad luck." He said Matthew's decision to form "uta" as his last word—instead of making another play that could have formed "our"—created an opening for Antimaro's winning "rup."

Before last week's tournament, Matthew had already secured a respectable 72nd spot out of the over 250 players ranked by Nasap nationwide covering all age groups.

And this "killer" on the square board is just warming up.

Karapatan: AFP liable for couple's abduction

By TJ Burgonio

WHILE IT HAS RELEASED them, the military should be held liable for abducting and illegally detaining activist couple Manuel Pajarito and Juliet Fernandez, a human rights group said yesterday.

"We would like them to be prosecuted. It's not the policy of the state to abduct people," said Karapatan deputy secretary general Jigs Clamor in a phone interview.

"This is the opposite of what Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has been saying that she does not tolerate human rights abuses. We challenge GMA to prosecute them and other officials guilty of such crimes," Clamor said.

Pajarito and Fernandez were among the 185 victims of enforced disappearance since 2001, according to Karapatan.

The Philippine Army's 62nd Infantry Battalion presented the couple to the press last Wednesday to belie reports they were killed follow-

ing their arrest by soldiers on May 11 this year at a checkpoint in Pinabacdao, Samar.

The couple were suspected members of the New People's Army.

Clamor said the military was liable for holding Pajarito and Fernandez since it never filed a case against them.

"We have no report the military filed a case against the couple. That's illegal detention. If it had a case against them, it should have turned them over to the police for the filing of charges and detention," he said.

"They should be held accountable for their acts, especially because Juliet Fernandez was pregnant when they were abducted," he said.

Karapatan cannot file charges on its own but would support any case to be filed by the couple, Clamor said.

"If they would like to pursue a case, we will support them," he said. Karapatan has yet to contact the couple, however.

Lim brought back to PNP jail in Crame amid heavy security

By Nikko Dizon

FORMER SCOUT RANGER commander, Army Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim, was brought back yesterday to the Philippine National Police (PNP) Custodial Center under heavy security.

The move following a Makati City court's recommitment order issued last Friday after the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) took custody of him last week.

Lim was turned over by the AFP to the PNP Custodial Center at around 12 noon, police and military spokespersons told the Inquirer in separate interviews.

A composite team made up of some 30 military escorts dressed in full battle gear secured Lim as he was moved from the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (Isafp) in Camp Aguinaldo to Camp Crame just across Edsa in Quezon City.

Lt. Col. Bartolome Bacarro, AFP spokesperson, confirmed the heavy security.

Lim's transfer reunited him with fellow Manila Pen standoff leaders, Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV and the Magdalo junior officers who renewed their call for the ouster of President Arroyo at the posh Makati City hotel last Nov. 29.

Last Thursday, Lim was brought back to Camp Capinpin in Tanay, Rizal where he was originally detained prior to the Manila Pen standoff as ordered by Makati City trial court Judge Elmo Alameda upon the request of the Army

general's lawyer.

Lim's counsel, Vicente Verdadero, had told the court that Lim has to attend the court-martial hearings conducted at Camp Capinpin for the failed February 2006 coup.

Lim had barely stayed a day in Tanay when AFP chief of staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr. ordered his transfer to the high security Isafp compound.

Esperon cited the request of the AFP Provost Marshal Gener-

al to have Lim detained at Camp Aguinaldo to expedite the investigation proceedings the military was conducting on the Nov. 29 incident, which the military chief had branded as a "power grab" attempt.

Keep kids away from piccolo, DOH warns

By Leila B. Salaverria

THE SMALL FIRECRACKER PICCOLO popular with children apparently packs a mean wallop, prompting the Department of Health to issue a public warning against the said pyrotechnic which it said should be banned for being dangerous and illegal.

Aside from his constant plea to the public to shun firecrackers, Health Secretary Francisco Duque III called on people, especially parents, to keep their children away from the piccolo.

A small, cheap and colorful firecracker lighted like a matchstick, the piccolo was the most common type of firecracker that caused most of the injuries reported to the DOH so far.

It has also led to more firecracker-related injuries in children aged 10 years and below since Dec. 21, according to Duque, who expressed concern that the piccolo is popular with children and is sold cheaply, at P10 per box.

"Piccolo has caused more injuries than any other firecracker or pyrotechnic device this year, ahead of the New Year's celebration when more Filipinos are feared to suffer more injuries," Duque said in a statement.

He cited statistics from the National Epidemiology Center (NEC) from Dec. 21 to 30 showing that the piccolo was the number one cause of fireworks and firecracker-related injuries for those 10 years old and below, causing 22 percent of such injuries. Of the said injuries, 72 percent were blast wounds or burns, while 28 percent were eye injuries.

NEC Director Eric Tayag also said the piccolo had its fair share of victims last year, with 119 recorded injuries.

Duque called on those who had bought the piccolo to dispose of these by placing them in a plastic bag and dousing it with water to render the firecrackers ineffective.

'Fire or be fired'

FIRE YOUR GUNS indiscriminately or be fired.

Philippine National Police (PNP) Chief Director General Avelino Razon yesterday warned policemen nationwide not to fire their guns to celebrate the New Year or risk being dismissed from the force.

Razon told the Inquirer that the same warning applies to members of the armed forces. He said he had already coordinated with Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr. on cases of soldiers caught firing their guns.

"Fire or be fired. This applies nationwide to all our police personnel and members of the military. If they fire their guns, they will be dismissed," Razon stressed.

Razon also warned policemen not to light illegal firecrackers. "They are not supposed to be lighting illegal firecrackers," Alcuin Papa

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Bhutto's son, husband hold key to legacy

ISLAMABAD—THE SON AND husband of Benazir Bhutto are among the main contenders for the leadership of the slain Pakistani opposition leader's party, which is likely to be decided Sunday.

A senior aide to Bhutto said the former premier's son was not keen to enter politics yet, leading to speculation that her widower, Asif Ali Zardari, could effectively take charge of the party until he is older.

Whatever the outcome, both will remain key figures in the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) founded four decades ago by Bhutto's father and now the crisis hit the country's biggest opposition group.

His mother's son

At just 19, the mantle of the

Bhutto family's bloodstained legacy would lie heavy on the head of Benazir's only son, Bilawal.

If picked for the top slot in the PPP he would be the third leader in its history after his mother and his grandfather, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who founded the party and was executed under martial law in 1979.

But he has already shown signs of following in his mother's footsteps, enrolling earlier this year at Oxford University, where Benazir Bhutto was head of the prestigious Oxford Union debating society.

Bilawal—meaning one without equal—was born in September 1988, a month before his mother won general elections under military dictator Zia-ul-Haq to become Pak-

istan's first female premier.

"I went back to sleep and woke up to the sound of a congratulatory gunshot being fired outside the hospital, the beating of drums and cries of Jiye (Long Live) Bhutto," The most celebrated and politically controversial baby in the history of Pakistan had been born," Bhutto said in her autobiography.

He and his two sisters went into exile with their mother in 1999, dividing their time between London and Dubai, where Bilawal attended school. Reports in local newspapers said he was keen on outdoor sports including target-shooting and horse riding.

Too young

At Benazir's funeral on Friday he was pictured looking com-

posed despite his grief, but analysts say he is currently too young to lead the party.

"Bilawal is just 19 years old, he needs to be groomed," political analyst and retired general Talat Masood said.

"They should let him complete his education. When he is in a position to assume he should be given the mantle."

Nicknamed "Mr. Ten Percent" by Pakistanis because of allegations about kickbacks from his wife's time in power, Asif Ali Zardari, 51, has gone from playboy to villain and now to grieving political widower.

Polo-playing scion

When he married into the Bhutto political dynasty in 1987, Zardari, then 31, was the little known scion of a landown-

ing polo-playing family from southern Sindh province.

He was born on July 21, 1956 in the rural Sindh district of Nawabshah and schooled in the commercial capital Karachi at the Saint Patrick High School, alma mater of President Pervez Musharraf.

He graduated from the Petaro Cadet College in 1972, an army-run institution known for its discipline and regimented life.

After their arranged marriage, Zardari gradually carved out an influential position for himself under his wife's two tenures in power.

8 years in jail

But he was back behind bars within half an hour of the dismissal of Bhutto's second gov-

ernment in 1996.

Zardari spent eight years in jail—five of them while his family lived in exile—before being freed in November 2004 after being cleared over the last of 17 cases of corruption, murder and drug smuggling.

His passion for thoroughbred horses was well known and landed him into trouble. One of the charges against him was that he maintained a costly stable in the prime minister's official residence in Islamabad at state expense.

"Zardari has a very tainted record. He may not consider himself suitable for the party leadership," Masood said.

"He may leave it to some senior member to lead the party. It will be more appropriate for the party and for him." AFP

Bhutto's son seen as too young to be mother's successor

From page A1

following among the poor.

The party leadership, due to meet in Bhutto's home town of Naudero in southern Pakistan—also where the will is to be read Sunday afternoon—must decide as well whether to contest the election if it goes ahead.

Former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's opposition party has said it would boycott the election and has been trying to convince Bhutto's PPP to do likewise.

However, a senior official of the former ruling party said an election due in little over a week was likely to be delayed.

"It seems more than likely that elections will be delayed," Tariq Azim Khan, a senior official of the Pakistan Muslim League party, said.

The party backs President Pervez Musharraf and ruled until a caretaker government was set up last month.

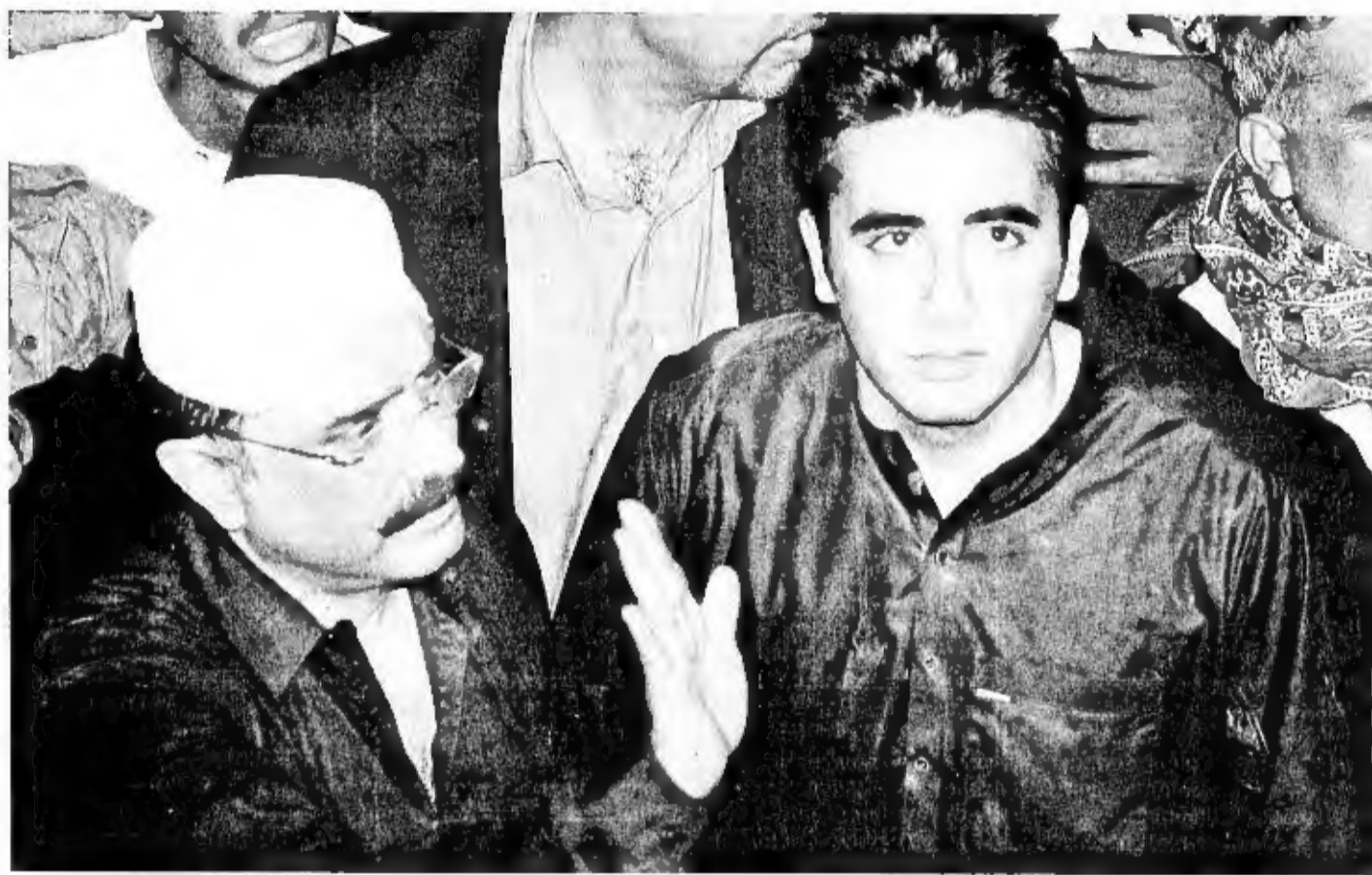
Khan said he expected a six-to-eight week postponement.

He said the party had suspended election campaigning for the January 8 parliamentary vote. "We have suspended our campaign because of the prevailing situation," he said.

So far the government has not announced any decision to call off or postpone the vote, but the Election Commission said it was planning an emergency meeting on Monday.

"They should postpone the election, as a mark of respect," Greg Turner, 50, an account manager at Siemens Pakistan, said on Sunday on his way to church.

"I think it's crucial elections are held. They are essential for democracy itself and the integrity of Pakistan. But a delay is inevitable," said Turner,



KEY FIGURES IN SUCCESSION: Benazir Bhutto's widower Asif Ali Zardari (left) and their son Bilawal, an Oxford law student are photographed at the family mausoleum during the former prime minister's funeral on Friday.

among the 2 percent of Pakistanis who are Christian in the overwhelmingly Islamic nation.

Anger at Musharraf

Bhutto's assassination in a suicide attack on Thursday has stoked violence and thrown into doubt the Jan. 8 election, deepening the crisis in the important US ally against terrorism as it struggles to emerge from military rule.

Anger against Musharraf burns strongly among Bhutto supporters. Since her death (See related story on Page A19) sporadic violence has erupted, boosting fears about

nuclear-armed Pakistan's stability.

The death toll from the violence has reached 47.

But streets in Karachi, site of much of the violence, were generally quiet and deserted on Sunday, witnesses said, although a disabled man was burned to death when a petrol station in the city was set on fire.

Bhutto's PPP has dismissed the government statement that al-Qaida killed her, saying Musharraf's embattled administration was trying to cover up its failure to protect her.

Although US President

George W. Bush has urged Pakistanis to hold the vote, a White House spokesperson said it was up to Pakistan's authorities to determine the timing.

US hopes wrecked

Washington had encouraged Bhutto, relatively liberal by Pakistan's standards and an opponent of Islamic militancy. She returned home from self-imposed exile in October, hoping to become prime minister for the third time.

Her death wrecked US hopes of a power-sharing deal between her and Musharraf, who took power in a military coup in

1999 but left the Army last month to become a civilian president.

'Ludicrous' death theory

A close aide who prepared Bhutto's body for burial dismissed as "ludicrous" a government theory she died after hitting her head on a sunroof during the suicide attack. A party spokesperson said she was shot in the head.

A Pakistani television channel broadcast on Sunday grainy still pictures of what it said appeared to be two men who attacked and killed Bhutto, one firing a pistol.

Interior Ministry spokesperson Javed Iqbal Cheema said the government's version was based on a medical report and other evidence collected from the scene of the attack.

"If the People's Party's leadership wants, her body can be exhumed and post-mortemed. They are most welcome," he added.

'We don't strike women'

The PPP has said the government must also show hard evidence al-Qaida is to blame. The accused al-Qaida-linked militants have denied any role. A spokesperson for militant leader Baitullah Mehsud said: "We don't strike women."

Other militants, however, issued threats against Bhutto when she returned in October, and her triumphal entry into Karachi was met with a suicide attack that killed at least 140 people.

Although early reports on Sunday suggested the country was relatively quiet after the previous days' violence, two suspected suicide bombers were killed in central Punjab province when the devices they carried exploded prematurely in an apparent botched attack on a former minister, police said.

Police said they believed Mohammad Ejaz-ul-Haq, a former religious affairs minister in Musharraf's government who had earlier been staying at a house 200 meters away from the site of the blast, was the intended target.

In Karachi on Sunday, hotel assistant manager Khan's main wish was for an end to the strife that has wracked the country.

"Every six months there's a problem here. Most Pakistanis would like to work outside the country. There are blasts, crimes, too much!" Reuters

Trillanes caper tops inquirer.net most read stories; Dollywood No. 1 column

From page A1

the failed July 2003 coup, also known as the Oakwood mutiny.

2. Chinese teen kills self when blind date turns ugly (Jan. 5, 2007)

A 17-year-old boy in northeastern China was so disappointed with the looks of a woman he met over the Internet that he hanged himself after seeing her face-to-face.

3. June 2007 nursing board exams result out (Aug. 26, 2007)

The results of June 2007 nursing licensure exams are finally released. Some 80,000 nursing graduates took the exams, including those who had taken and passed the June 2006 exams but elected to retake them to remove the stigma that they benefited from the leak of test questions the previous year. The June 2006 results became highly controversial when a substantial portion of the questions was leaked to examinees reviewing at several review centers around the country. The controversy led to a Senate inquiry, the filing of court cases and finally reached the United States whose Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools said no passers of the tainted 2006 exams would be considered for hiring in the

United States. Leonor Rosero-Tripón, chair of the Professional Regulations Commission, said the 2007 exams would "bring closure" to the test leak scandal of the June 2006 nursing licensure examinations.

4. Mall bomb blast kills 8, hurts more than 100 (Oct. 19, 2007)

On Oct. 19, 2007, an explosion ripped through the Glorietta 2 shopping mall in Makati. Eight people died instantly. The final body count was 11. Initially, there were suspicions that it was a terrorist attack. But Philippine National Police investigators eventually found that it was an accidental gas explosion, a finding that was disputed by the mall's owners, the Ayala Land Inc. On Dec. 23, the PNP announced that it would review its final report and compare it with an initial report submitted by Ayala Land.

5. 46% pass nursing exams (Aug. 29, 2007)

A graduate of Our Lady of Fatima University-Valenzuela topped the nursing board licensure exams conducted in June 2007 by the Professional Regulation Commission's Board of Nursing in Manila, Baguio, Cagayan de Oro, Cebu, Davao, Iloilo, Legazpi, Lucena, Tacloban, Tuguegarao and Zamboanga

cities. Of the 64,909 takers, who included first-timers, repeaters and voluntary "retakers," 31,275, or 48 percent, passed.

6. Cloudy skies may block RP view of lunar eclipse on Tuesday (Aug. 27, 2007)

A total lunar eclipse occurred on Aug. 28, but Filipinos' view of the eclipse was obscured by clouds.

7. Estrada guilty of plunder; perjury rap dropped (Sept. 12, 2007)

On Sept. 12, deposed President Joseph Estrada was found guilty of plunder by the Sandiganbayan anti-graft court and sentenced up to 40 years in prison. The court ordered the forfeiture of cash and property belonging to Estrada which represented the illegal gambling bribes that he collected amounting to P545.29 million with interest, including the P200 million deposited in the name of the Erap Muslim Youth Foundation; the P189-million commission Estrada received from the purchase of Belle Corp. shares on his orders by state-run pension funds that ended up in his account using the "Jose Velarde" alias, and the 5,192.68 sq.m. so-called "Boracay Mansion" in New Manila, Quezon City.

8. Bomb rocks Congress;

solon among 4 killed (Nov. 14, 2007)

A bomb explosion rocked the south wing driveway of the Batasan complex, killing three people, including Basilan Rep. Wahab Akbar, and wounding eight others, two of them also legislators. Three of the injured later died in hospital. The initial police investigation showed Akbar, 47, a former governor of strife-torn Basilan province, to have been the target of what may have been an assassination. The explosion was shown to have been caused by a bomb planted on one of the motorcycles parked near the entrance of the Batasan south wing, which was detonated by a cellular phone.

9. Pimentel son on embattled Abalos: 'Karma' (Sept. 18, 2007) Lawyer Aquilino "Koko" Pimentel III used a forum in Quezon City to accuse Commission on Elections Chair Benjamin Abalos of having "masterminded" the alleged cheating in the May 2007 elections in which he lost his senatorial bid. Pimentel said the controversy hounding Abalos in the allegedly irregular national broadband network project was his "karma."

10. '07 nursing board results out in August (June 29, 2007)

A member of the Board of Nursing said the results of the

June 2007 nursing licensure examinations would be released in August, or a month later than the announcement of results of past tests, explaining that the month's delay was primarily due to the volume of examinees this year.

Top 10 Overall Columns

1. Dollywood by Dolly Anne Carvajal, published in the Entertainment section

2. On Target by Ramon Tulfo, published in the Metro section on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays

3. Editorial, appearing daily in the Opinion section

4. Bare Eye by Recah

Doronila regrets offending Manalo son in column

From page A1

sa III" rallies.

Doronila said what he wrote about Manalo and a number of other people was based solely on what he obtained from intelligence sources.

Doronila's statement follows:

"I regret having offended

the feelings of Mr. Eduardo V. Manalo by stating in my article that he was with certain politicians around the time of the May 2001 riots. I have no personal knowledge of Mr. Manalo's participation in said event. My statement referring to him and a number of other people was based solely on intelligence sources."

5. Viewfinder, by Nestor Torre in the Entertainment section

6. There's The Rub by Conrado de Quiros, weekdays in the Opinion section

7. Only in Hollywood by Ruben Nepales, the INQUIRER correspondent in Los Angeles

8. In Huddle by Beth Celis, which appears in the Sports section on Thursdays and Sundays

9. Emily's Post, advice column by Emily Marcelo, Sundays in the Lifestyle section

10. As I See It, by Neal Cruz, weekdays in the Opinion section

Compiled by Inquirer.net

Tight watch on passport fixers set

THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN Affairs has sought the assistance of the Pasay City police to arrest fixers near its consular office with the influx of applicants for machine readable passport.

"From time to time, authorities are making arrests," DFA As-

sistant Secretary and spokesperson Claro Cristobal said.

Cristobal said the presence of fixers had always been a problem but that the department had always been coordinating with the police and the National Bureau of Investigation for assistance.

Even the Philippine Travel Agencies Association (PTAA) had been complaining to the DFA about fixers and the proliferation of "fly by night travel agencies," particularly those operating near the DFA passport section in Pasay City. PTAA President Jose

Clemente said "fly by night" travel agencies tainted the image of legitimate travel agencies and their organization.

Clemente said the "fly by night" travel agencies have hired the services of fixers who usually mislead passport applicants to get free passport appli-

cation forms in their offices along Libertad Street even before they reach the passport section of the Department.

He said applicants are charged twice the regular fee of P500 for regular processing or P750 for expedite. Cynthia D. Balana

Passage of 3 bills pushed

SEN. MAR ROXAS is pushing for the passage of three bills meant to provide a quick cash boost to Filipinos who have yet to taste the benefits of the country's economic growth in the past years.

"We need to keep more money in people's wallets. We need strategies for hope rather than formulas for fear and divisiveness," said Roxas in a statement.

The bills are the suspension of the 12 percent expanded value added tax on oil and other fuel products for up to six months, income tax exemption for minimum wage earners, and the pending bill on cheaper medicines.

Roxas said he would push for the immediate holding of public hearings on his proposal to temporarily suspend the 12 percent VAT on oil products to give relief to consumers and transport groups much relief until world crude oil prices have stabilized. Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

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GSIS reaped benefits from investments in blue-chip stocks in the stock market. This success was touted as "the loudest and strongest statement of confidence" in the Philippine economy under Her Excellency Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's term.

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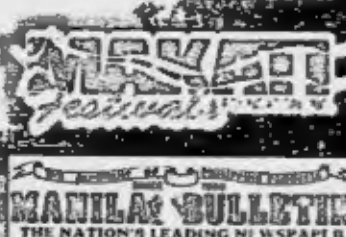


Photo by: Roger Alcantara of Manila Bulletin



Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Cardinal Rosales (R) blesses children and residents after holding a Mass in a poor community in Manila as the Catholic Church commemorated the feast of the Holy Family yesterday. The archbishop called on the Philippine government to stop violent demolitions on poor communities as well as to extend help to poor families in relocation and livelihood.

By Ed General and Julie Alipala
Inquirer Mindanao

"We also heard several disturbing reports from Panamaco

She said she immediately got a call from Ronburg telling her to shut off the generator.

As of Friday, the hospital remained closed at night as staffers were afraid of going against the order of the Americans, Lakkian said.

"Dr. Rubio lamentably failed

The PACG's investigation report said Rubio repeatedly vio-

The investigation also unearthed another violation, this time against the Code of Conduct, by Rubio who was found to have received double compensation as officer in charge of the LCP and assistant secretary for the management support service cluster of the Department of Health.

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ISSN 0116-2642

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Vol. 23 No. 23



Silence, not noise

THE NUMBERS, ACCORDING TO HEALTH SECRETARY Francisco Duque, are encouraging. We have fewer victims of pre-New Year's Eve revelry-related violence this year than we had the same period a year ago. To be sure, today is the day most of the fireworks purchased or produced in the last month are used, so we will have to wait until tomorrow to know whether there has been, in fact, an overall easing in the number of accidents and injuries. It is certainly too early to claim even a temporary victory in the war on stupidity and recklessness.

A few incidents, of course, are true accidents; even products guaranteed safe can prove defective. But the great majority of revelry-related incidents are avoidable. Why do so many of us fail to avoid them?

It should be easy enough to understand the principle that guns shouldn't be fired to greet the New Year; bullets kill. That is what they were designed to do. Even the allegedly practical expedient of firing into trees or into the ground is not fail-safe. So why fire guns at all?

One guess: Because too many of us fail to see that the risks apply to us as well. To many of us, violence always happens to the other person—until, of course, the next bullet fired in giddy merrymaking comes crashing through our roof.

Violence happens to other people—this is the same insufficiently reflective attitude that explains why passengers continue to crowd into what they know is an overloaded boat or why many drivers still refuse to use regulation seatbelts.

This same lack of a safety mind-set bedevils the many efforts, conducted by such groups as the Red Cross or by agencies of the government, at disaster preparedness. We think that natural calamities, like acts of man-made violence, happen to other people.

We take encouragement from the apparent decrease in the casualty lists; it is possible that the regular end-of-year barrage of images of firecracker blast victims and firearms-inflicted injuries has brought more and more Filipinos to their senses. The annual gun-sealing exercise that members of the country's armed services go through may strike many as PR gimmickry, but it is possible that over the years it has made a strong impression. Exhortations from church pulpits may no longer put the fear of God in the faithful, but it is possible that they do add moral suasion to the argument against revelry-related violence.

But much more remains to be done.

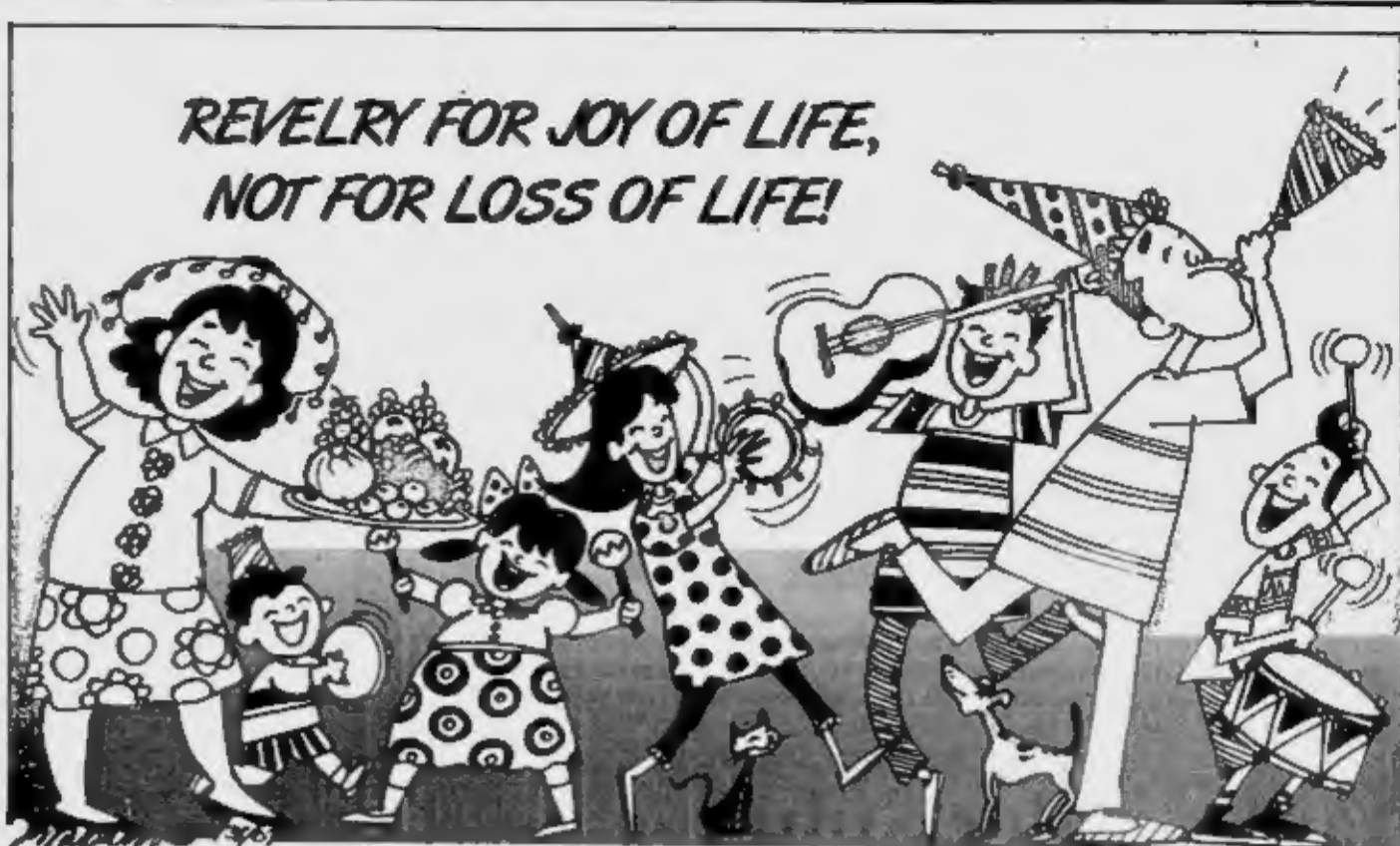
We understand that tireless Gunless Society advocate Nandy Pacheco has proposed a weeklong firearms holiday during the Christmas-New Year's season; this may be worth considering, if only to lessen the probability of firearms-inflicted violence.

If we can reduce the number of injuries caused by New Year's Eve merry-makers firing their guns, then we would have started the year right. If we can mete out harsher punishment to those who cause firearms-inflicted injuries or even deaths, then we would have greeted the New Year with a truly big bang: the sound of justice faithfully served. If we can still the guns for a day, or for a week, then we would have made way for the biggest sound of all: the silence of peacemakers.

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Stop the manufacturers to stop the mayhem

HAPPY NEW YEAR TO EVERYBODY. FULFILL your New Year's resolutions.

Tonight, the Philippines will be like a war zone: explosions everywhere, fires here and there, smoke rising like a fog, the air smelling of burnt gunpowder, fireworks lighting the night sky. The hospitals will be filled with the dead, dying and injured; the fingers and limbs of some will have to be amputated. And yet we call all of that "merrymaking." What a way to make merry!

Every year, the authorities go through the same rignarole of trying to reduce the blood-letting. After the "merrymaking," however, the number of casualties is as high as ever. But after the corpses are buried, we forget the mayhem and repeat the carnage the next year. Why do we do this to ourselves?

Because of tradition. Because foreigners taught us to drive away the old year and welcome the new one with noise. And because these foreigners, especially the Chinese and the Spaniards, introduced us to gunpowder and fireworks as noisemakers.

As predictable as the sun rising in the east, the government warns the people against exploding firecrackers and firing their guns into the air on New Year's Eve—all for show, just to show that it is doing something about the insanity but knowing that it can't stop this madness. The police seize pyrotechnics being sold, only to surreptitiously sell them later to customers. The government also makes a show of putting paper tapes around the barrels of the service firearms of policemen and soldiers, ha, ha, ha. The Department of Health tells the people in press releases not to explode firecrackers, but it knows that people will not heed its advice. The fire department issues reminders through media on how to avoid fires, knowing that it would still be busy fighting fires during the "merrymaking." And the hospitals prepare their emergency rooms, stock medical supplies and medicines, and call in all their medical personnel, in preparation for a deluge of pa-

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz



tients before the year is over.

But nobody, yes, nobody, seriously bothers to prevent the deaths, injuries and loss of property by going to the source: the pyrotechnics manufacturers. People will continue buying and exploding firecrackers as long as these are available, never mind all the warnings and press releases. You cannot stop decades of habit and tradition with a few press releases. And we have to admit it, people get a high watching fireworks and hearing exploding firecrackers.

The solution is not to stop the people from exploding firecrackers (you can't; it's harder than stopping cockfighting). It is to stop the pyrotechnics factories from manufacturing powerful firecrackers that can injure people. People will buy them if these dangerous firecrackers are sold; people never entertain the idea that they could be among the victims.

The police, with reporters and cameramen in tow, raid stores selling firecrackers and confiscate the illegal ones—but all for show, knowing that they cannot stop the flow of firecrackers. The few bundles confiscated do not make a dent in the supply; there are more hidden somewhere. Like illegal drugs: you cannot stop the flow unless you go to the source and stop it there.

If you can stop the factories from manufacturing powerful firecrackers and instead get them to make only the small cigarette-sized ones and the fireworks that explode in the sky, then we will have the problem licked. You do not deprive the manufacturers and their workers of their source of livelihood; you also prevent scores of people from dying and being maimed. The merrymaking and the tradition

can continue, but people can be saved. It's as simple as regularly inspecting the factories year-round—not only when Christmas is around the corner. By that time, the firecrackers will have been manufactured. And once made, they have to be sold so the manufacturers get their investments back. And if they are available for sale, people will buy them.

The job of inspecting the pyrotechnics factories falls on the local government units, especially in Bulacan and Cebu, centers of the pyrotechnics industries. But local government officials are easily swayed by the "pakiusap" of their "kababayan."

But with the solution offered above, nobody will lose any job or investment. Nobody will lose their lives or fingers, either. That's not so hard to do, is it?

As for the national government, it can provide incentives for more modern pyrotechnics factories like the ones they have in China, Taiwan and Hong Kong. The dangerous firecrackers we are exploding are being made by children in small factories in nipa shacks in the middle of rice fields in Bulacan. They explode from time to time, killing and maiming the children. Because of unsafe practices. Because the government is not teaching them how to do it properly.

Before I end, I would like to relay to those who are thinking of exploding firecrackers tonight some thoughts from doctors.

It is this: Tonight is the most likely time to lose fingers or limbs if you are careless. Because of the flood of patients tonight, surgeons do not have the luxury of time in trying to save limbs blasted by firecrackers. Limbs that can be saved at other times cannot be saved tonight. It takes a surgical team many hours to sew back mangled limbs, suture tiny blood vessels and nerves together. They can't do that tonight, much as they want to. There is no time. They have to save the lives of other patients.

So the surgeons are forced to amputate badly mangled limbs to prevent infection that would endanger the life of the blast victim. Remember that when you handle firecrackers tonight.

Driving demons away

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros



two are not always easily distinguishable. Over the last few years, our neighborhood has been turned into Karaoke Country on New Year's Eve. Well, never mind New Year's Eve, over the last few years our neighborhood has been turned into Karaoke Country on weekends. But New Year's Eve is especially resolutely dedicated to it, the belters/torch singers finding in the occasion added license to cast their voices, boosted in no small way by plunging echoes, to the winds or the eases of the long-suffering. The men's favorite is "Please Release Me" (which is exactly the sentiment it elicits from listeners) and the women's "Dancing Queen." Wondrously, the beer seems to have helped improve the singing over the years, much of it now being in tune, where before the singer was going to Quiapo and the accompaniment to Anipolo.

Every New Year's Eve, I myself play Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, alternating between Herbert Von Karajan's and Leonard Bernstein's versions. It's as near to heaven as I've been able to get on earth, and it's always a kick being able to play it loudly while the first signs of an impending din, or aural super storm are setting in. It's always a kick as well being able to torment the people shouting "Please Release Me" with my diabolical racket. Like I said, music and noise are not always easily distinguishable. Depends on the listener.

Three, remember old friends, cherish new ones. Better still, keep their company either physically or electronically today. New Year's Eve seems especially conducive to marking time—it is a line of demarcation unto itself—end and beginning, death and rebirth, remembrance and hope. Nothing drives home

the point more than the miracle of friends.

Years ago, someone gave me a copy of Isak Dinesen's "Babette's Feast," a wondrous story about abundance amid austerity, fulfillment amid frustration, grace amid obligation. The movie, a Danish production, is just as wondrous, but may be harder to find (I don't have it myself). Just get the book. I can at least guarantee it will chase away your personal demons of frustration and disappointment and hurts and give you a new way of looking at life.

Four, some demons are personal, others are national. Don't just light a candle, curse the darkness. Some noises are better than others.

I'm not entirely a subscriber to Joecon's favorite motto about it being better to light a candle than curse the darkness. Certainly not the way many people interpret it these days, which is to ignore injustice and just concentrate on "positive" things. There is nothing positive about ignoring injustice, all it does is completely negatively strengthen it. It's all very well to light a candle than curse the darkness when the darkness is nobody's fault, it just happened to be there. If the darkness is somebody's fault, light a candle and curse the darkness—or the cause of the darkness. And I don't mean Napocor. You don't curse the cause of the disruption of electricity; you'll spend an eternity lighting candles.

Five, maybe it's time to try peace and quiet. We've tried firecrackers, we've tried curses, we've tried Pen and Ink (or Oakwood, in some cases), and none of them seems to work. Maybe we can try introspection. I've always wondered in any case where that idea came from—that demons detest noise and commotion. The opposite seems truer: Demons thrive on them. Maybe it's by looking into our own hearts and listening to the sounds of silence that we can hear the sound of the one hand clapping, as the Zen Buddhists put it. Whatever the hell that means.

Six, when everything else fails, make love, not war. Some explosions are more blissful than others.

Agrarian reform

SOUNDING BOARD

Fr. Joaquin G. Bernas, S.J.



sion order, what should the government do about the construction already completed? What would the much vaunted rule of law dictate? Again, just asking.

Obviously I am referring to the President's order of Dec. 18, 2007 which says that "the unilateral development of subject landholdings into a hog farm by SMFI is not one of the purposes for which the conversion order has been issued. This clearly deviates from and constitutes a violation of the conversion order issued to the respondent NQSRMDC."

I have heard it said that *ubi injuria, ibi jus*. Another question is about the meaning of landlessness. What is the legal meaning of "landless"? Under Republic Act 6657 "One is considered landless if he/she owns less than 3 hectares of agricultural land."

Incidentally, much has been said about the 66-hectare Carlos Estate adjoining the controversial Sumilao property. The 66 hectares were distributed among 78 farmers belonging to the Mapalad Multi-Purpose Cooperative who received between .4 and .9 hectares per family. Under the law, they are by no means landed farmers.

The point of the agrarian reform program is to distribute lands to provide landless farmers with sustainable livelihood. This is why the law provides that a family size farm which is around three hectares is necessary to fulfill the program's objective of improving the lives of farmer-beneficiaries. To say that the Sumilao farmers who own lands whose sizes are far less than what is provided by

law are no longer qualified beneficiaries is to push aside the very spirit of the agrarian reform law.

Another misconception that has been spread is that one must be a tenant in order to be a beneficiary under the Agrarian Reform Law. Again RA 6657 corrects that misconception or that deliberate attempt at obfuscation. Section 22 says:

Qualified Beneficiaries. The lands covered by the CARP [Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program] shall be distributed as much as possible to landless residents of the same barangay, or in the absence thereof, landless residents of the same municipality in the following order of priority:

- (a) agricultural lessees and share tenants;
- (b) regular farm workers;
- (c) seasonal farm workers;
- (d) other farm workers;
- (e) actual tillers or occupants of public lands;
- (f) collective or cooperatives of the above beneficiaries; and
- (g) others directly working on the land.

Do the Sumilao farmers qualify under this law? Definitely they do. As a matter of fact, most of them were the same farmers who, before the issuance of the conversion order by then Executive Secretary Ruben Torres, had been screened and awarded the Certificate of Land Ownership (CLOA).

It is now more than 10 years since they won and lost their CLOA to an abandoned conversion order. Now they are back to square one, but still hopeful. They are back in the pre-coverage stage and must go through the inclusion/exclusion process after DAR issues the notice of coverage.

Already the contest is unbalanced, David against Goliath. The least that the powerful can do, if they must fight the farmers, is to fight fair. For instance, let the powerful forego the claim that there is a Sanggunian resolution supporting the piggery project. Where is that resolution? What I have seen is an amateurish production of a bogus resolution!

A Blessed New Year!

Hopefully, a better year for everyone

FIRST OF ALL, BELATED HOLIDAY GREETINGS GO TO Sen. Antonio "Sonny" Trillanes IV. I realize he has been the subject of a number of negative news items in the past few days, including an expensive full-page ad from a group calling itself "Kongreso ng... something."

This young man, who has been incarcerated for more than four years with no end in sight, has stood up to powerful forces in the country, speaking out loud about the abuses of a corrupt administration. And apparently, his views—not necessarily his methods—reflect the sentiments of our people. As indicated in the recent poll of Pulse Asia, we are living under the rule of the most corrupt politician in the history of the country. Only a few weeks earlier, Transparency International, a Berlin-based organization, released its Global Corruption Barometer for 2007, showing that the Philippines was No. 10 in the top 10 countries with the highest level of bribery. Cambodia and the Philippines are the only Asian countries in this top 10 list. The study said that "too often, people must part with their hard-earned money to pay for services that should be free. And they do not see enough commitment when they look to their governments and leaders." How can we expect commitment when some of the shadiest deals in the country are cooked up in the highest echelons of government?

Now, those are issues that we ought to get angry about. Instead, we castigate Trillanes who is basically the messenger of bad news which we would rather not hear. In 1989, rebel military units launched the deadliest attack against a highly popular government led by President Cory Aquino. They held the nation's business center, Makati, hostage for almost a week before proudly marching back to their barracks in Fort Bonifacio. Some analysts declared that more harm was done to the economy by this coup attempt than anything else in recent years. The acknowledged leader was Col. Gregorio Honasan.

Guess what? Honasan was elected to the Senate. According to Sen. Aquilino Pimentel, Honasan was also the leader or godfather of the 2003 Oakwood mutiny of which Senator Trillanes was the leading spokesman. Guess what? After Honasan was arrested for his suspected involvement in this mutiny, he was allowed to run for the Senate. He won, and today occupies his seat in Congress. While in government captivity, Sonny Trillanes also ran for the Senate. He won by over 11 million votes. As I mentioned in an earlier column, Trillanes did not engage in *dagdag-bawas* operations. He did not engage in massive vote-buying using the money of the people. He did not take advantage of a fertilizer fund earmarked for our farmers for use in his campaign. He did not have the usual troupe of movie stars and entertainers to attract attention to his cause.

And yet, he defeated administration giants like Mike Defensor, Prospero Pichay, Ralph Recto and better-known personalities like Tito Sotto and Tessie Oreta, as well as movie stars Cesar Montano and Richard Gomez.

What does all this mean? It means that we as a people have a soft heart for the rebel. Perhaps it is our personal stamp of defiance, our way of expressing anger and disillusionment with our leaders who continue to fail us. We are willing to take the risk with young, untested but idealistic and reform-oriented individuals, hoping that one day, "we will strike gold and come up with someone who will lead us to a better future."

According to television reports, the family of Senator Trillanes was given two additional hours to spend with him on Christmas Day. The usual visitation hours are from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. These were extended to 5 p.m. How thoughtful of the Philippine National Police to extend this bit of comfort to a detained senator on Christmas Day.

By the way, how did convicted rapist Romeo Jalosjos spend Christmas Day? Was he given additional two hours to spend with his family? Or has it been Christmas for much of the year for him and other influential detainees? Even convicted murderers get holiday passes in order to spend a couple of days outside the National Penitentiary with their families. We have one set of rules for rebels who pose a threat to the government and another for rapists and murderers who pose a threat to society but not to the government.

These are difficult days for Senator Trillanes but we all know that Easter Sunday is always preceded by the agony of Good Friday. Keep in mind that many leaders in other countries spent time in captivity before attaining positions of power and influence. Even the recently assassinated Benazir Bhutto was in jail or under different forms of captivity for five years, dented by many of her own countrymen, before becoming the first female prime minister of a Muslim country. I have no doubt that for Trillanes, the years ahead will be better and brighter.

A number of readers have called about Miguel del Prado, the young man with the healing hands. Apparently, in my last column I provided the wrong phone number. *Mea culpa!* The correct number is 892-6367 and his cell phone is 0917-824-1104.

Next week will be interesting days for the Philippine Air Force. The incumbent, Lt. Gen. Horacio Tolentino, a member of PMA Class 1974 and classmate of AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr., is due to retire on Feb. 7, 2008, more than a month away.

But the leading candidate for the position, Lt. Gen. Pedrito Cadungog, the current AFP deputy chief of staff is due to retire on Jan. 11, 2009, which means that if Tolentino stays on all the way to Feb. 7, his compulsory retirement date, Cadungog would be short of the one-year requirement for appointment as service commander. For Cadungog to take over as PAF chief per the recommendation of the AFP Board of Generals, it is necessary for Tolentino to retire in the next few days.

This situation is very similar to the case of Vice Adm. Ernesto de Leon of the Philippine Navy, who retired earlier in order to make way for Vice Adm. Mateo Mayuga. If our readers will recall, up to the very last minute, Mayuga was not sure of assuming the Navy post. The rumor was that another officer, close to the powers-that-be, was moving heaven and earth to keep Mayuga from taking over, and hoping that he would be the chosen one.

AS WE ENTER INTO THE YEAR 2008 THERE will be more legal controversies. Among those which I hope will be settled are those involving agrarian reform. For one, the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law (CARL) is about to expire. Should it be extended in its present form or in an amended form? Or should it be extended at all?

Much will be said about this in the coming months. There are those who say that the law in its present form is a failure but is remediable, but there are also those who say that the government is incapable of making any land reform law a success.

Even under the present CARL, there are controversies which will still have to be settled. And the farmers of Sumilao will be very much in the thick of the fray.

One interesting and novel question which came up in a discussion I had with a number of lawyers is whether the law on builders in bad faith can have application in agrarian reform controversies. Article 449 of the Civil Code says: "He who builds, plants or sows in bad faith on the land of another, loses what is built, planted or sown without right to indemnity." And Article 450 says: "The owner of the land on which anything has been built, planted or sown in bad faith may demand the demolition of the work, or that the planting or sowing be removed, in order to replace things in their former condition at the expense of the person who built, planted or sowed, or he may compel the builder or planter to pay the price of the land, and the sower the proper rent."

Admittedly, the literal language of the law says that one is a builder in bad faith if he builds or sows on land that does not belong to him. But can the principle be extended to one who builds in violation of agrarian law, as in the case of one who builds on land that has been converted to agro-industrial use but who does not follow the conditions imposed by the conversion order? Just asking.

And if it is the registered owner of the land who builds in violation of the terms of the conver-

WHILE PONDERING THE EVENTS THAT MATERED in 2007—family, work, personal/social advocates, etc.—it dawned on me that I have completed a year of fighting my nicotine addiction. After finishing the last stick I had in my cigarette case last Jan. 1, I quit smoking cold-turkey. Some friends doubted that I could successfully kick the addiction, even just for a week. Yet, starting tomorrow, I will be on my second nicotine-free year, and it is hoped, onward to a smoke-free and healthy life ahead.

I smoked for more than two decades—since my high school years. I have tried to quit smoking several times in the past and I have had several successes, the shortest was for a day and the longest was six months. In two past instances, I was embroiled in "controversies" and became a subject of media commentaries in Davao City due to cigarette-smoking.

The withdrawal stage is difficult, especially if you decide not to use "nicotine substitutes." What sustained me, though, aside from the truly convincing health and economic benefits, was the fact that I would be making the people dear to me also happy, especially my 9-year-old son XYZ, who is asthmatic and who has been reminding me constantly for years that "smoking is bad for your health." My wife Charina also did her own "stop-smoking program." I am glad that materials and programs on quitting smoking are now readily available from many sources, including the Internet.

There is no available data yet to confirm this, but I presume that the anti-smoking "setting" in Davao City also helped in boosting the resolve of "nicotine addicts" like me to recover. The city is the first major city in the country to totally ban cigarette-smoking in public places and public vehicles. It has regulated smoking in private establishments where people congregate and banned tobacco sales and advertisements within a radius of 100 meters from schools. The city not only imposes the ban strictly, it also provides the necessary support mechanism, like counseling programs, for "quitters."

PASSING THROUGH NUEVE DE FEBRERO ON my way to visit my mother in Makati last Christmas Eve, I nearly committed homicide twice. (Then again, later on, on my way to Alabang to visit my paternal side of the family, I spent an extremely embarrassing three minutes at the toll gate looking for someone to pay toll to, only to find out there was a holiday moratorium on tolls, but someone forgot to turn off the alarms; so I screeched to a halt, terrified as an irate motorist honked at me, in fear of being arrested. What if it wasn't a holiday freebie but instead, the attendant had answered a call of nature?)

Still, Nueve de Febrero yet proved to be one of the most dangerous roads in the metropolis and an example of everything that's wrong with our urban planning. My quick journey featured—as the neighboring community's contribution to Holiday Cheer—several drunks who decided to scoot across the road in order to jump on to the large concrete island in the middle. Having someone zigzag his way across your lane at less-than-full speed is nerve-racking enough, having him try to scale a concrete island and fall—which means they risk falling on the roof of your car—is equally bad. But to top it all off, there were the usual grenades-in-training. Which is what most young boys in the country become this time of year, with their accompanying weapons of mass destruction, the firecrackers.

The *watusi* and sparklers and other innocuous holiday entertainment, instead of being signs of holiday cheer, are like the flares used to signal the mass bombardment of trenches during World War I. Where a *watusi* sputters and dances, a young bomber, armed with *triangulo* or *banwang*, cannot be far away—and that is just a portent of things to come. Wait till "Judas-belt time" comes rolling along. Then we're talking of serious ordinance.

They say that in other countries, the firecrackers are as noisy as ours, but far less lethal. It seems easier to pack a firecracker full of gunpowder than to figure out the more intricate pyrotechnical details that allow you to make a big bang—without risking the mutilation of anyone nearby.

'Wish Ko Lang'

KRIS-CROSSING MINDANAO

Carlos Isagani T. Zarate



Sadly, though, there are still many places in the country where the Tobacco Regulation Act of 2003 (RA 9211) is not being strictly implemented, such that you can still see insensitive smokers puffing their hearts out, so to speak, in public places, inside public vehicles and in restaurants. In fact, some of those who willfully violate the law are government officials and law enforcers.

Maybe, there is a need to amend RA 9211—to impose stiffer penalties on violators if they are government employees and officials. There is a pending bill in the House of Representatives that requires the depiction of the dangers of tobacco smoking right on the packages of all tobacco products. I think this bill should be passed into law pronto, since the current "Government Warning: Cigarette smoking is dangerous to your health" is, apparently, not effective enough as a deterrent.

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Let's get loud

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III



Boys will be boys, and whenever New Year rolls along, so does the transformation of the average Filipino male into a mad bomber.

Do this, though: pay close attention to the level of firepower you observe on New Year's Eve, and you will be armed with a rough but pretty handy guide as to what the coming year will be like.

I remember New Year's Eve 1986 as the loudest, flashiest New Year I've ever been through: it was what the fall of Berlin to the Russians must have been like. To the East, an enormous barrage took place, answered with a corresponding barrage from the West (this is in relation to where I was—New Manila). It was better than any war movie I had ever seen: the ground shook more than it did during the coup in 1989, and while the artillery of the Reform the Armed Forces Movement (RAM) were frightening, the booming of firecrackers as 1986 was ushered in was of a duration and intensity that Gringo Honasan was never able to match.

In contrast to the dawning of 1986 was the way people greeted 1987. While every patriotic Filipino seemed to have spent a fortune on firecrackers just to spite Marcos (who had issued yet another presidential exhortation against firecrackers), in 1987 everyone seemed inclined to give Cory a break and reduced their firecracker budget. It was one of the quietest New Year's Eves ever. New Year's Eve 1990, after Gringo's adventures, was also very quiet.

As have the past few New Years been. The barrage that begins five minutes before New Year and ends 10 to 20 minutes later (proof positive of the wide variance of local time among watch-wearing Filipinos) has gotten shorter and shorter,

and less and less intense. Is it a sign of growing maturity or increasingly harder times? Inquiring columnists want to know.

When the majority of watches strike 12, and people let loose their hoarded noise- and concussion-makers, perk up your ears. See how long the revelry lasts: and either rejoice at what augurs to be a good year, or tremble over more hard times to come.

Ah, the wisdom of children. A couple of holiday days ago, I stayed with friends in Baguio, and their entire clan.

Seventeen—I repeat, 17—children were there, from little babies to a 12-year-old girl who threatened to beat up two smaller boys for being cruel to her brother. And everywhere, were doting parents and parents-to-be, exchanging family gossip, chortling over the antics of their kids, seemingly oblivious to the racket around them.

I am not fond of children but I survived the stampeding and blood-curdling yells of the children just fine. They were a friendly lot; but my attempts at interaction always fell flat.

There was one boy in particular who apparently felt quite sorry for me. Playing with a puppy that had been brought up by one of the mothers-to-be, the boy watched me play with the puppy for 10 minutes, then shook his head and said, "You know, he bites."

And then he left me to my own devices. Another night, the same boy went around with a device attached to his wrists. When put together, the device made noise. Around the living room he marched, making "zzzz-zzzz" sounds with the device. Imagine five minutes of this: "zzz," stomp, stomp, stomp, "zzz" stomp stomp, "zzz, zzz, zzzzzzz..."

Finally he stopped in front of me and exhibited his instruments of torture.

"What is that?" I asked in mock-awe, trying to play along.

He gave me a withering look.

"It's a toy!" And he stomped off, disgusted with my lack of intelligence.

Suffer the little children, indeed.

Agrarian reform

SOUNDING BOARD

Fr. Joaquin G. Bernas, S.J.



sion order, what should the government do about the construction already completed? What would the much vaunted rule of law dictate? Again, just asking.

Obviously I am referring to the President's order of Dec. 18, 2007 which says that "the unilateral development of subject landholdings into a hog farm by SMFI is not one of the purposes for which the conversion order has been issued. This clearly deviates from and constitutes a violation of the conversion order issued to the respondent NQSRMDC."

I have heard it said that *ubi injuria, ibi jus*. Another question is about the meaning of landlessness. What is the legal meaning of "landless"? Under Republic Act 6657 "One is considered landless if he/she owns less than 3 hectares of agricultural land."

Incidentally, much has been said about the 66-hectare Carlos Estate adjoining the controverted Sumilao property. The 66 hectares were distributed among 78 farmers belonging to the Mapalad Multi-Purpose Cooperative who received between 4 and 9 hectares per family. Under the law, they are by no means landed farmers.

The point of the agrarian reform program is to distribute lands to provide landless farmers with sustainable livelihood. This is why the law provides that a family size farm which is around three hectares is necessary to fulfill the program's objective of improving the lives of farmer-beneficiaries. To say that the Sumilao farmers who own lands whose sizes are far less than what is provided by

law are no longer qualified beneficiaries is to push aside the very spirit of the agrarian reform law.

Another misconception that has been spread is that one must be a tenant in order to be a beneficiary under the Agrarian Reform Law. Again RA 6657 corrects that misconception or that deliberate attempt at obfuscation. Section 22 says:

Qualified Beneficiaries. The lands covered by the CARP [Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program] shall be distributed as much as possible to landless residents of the same barangay, or in the absence thereof, landless residents of the same municipality in the following order of priority:

- (a) agricultural lessees and share tenants;
- (b) regular farm workers;
- (c) seasonal farm workers;
- (d) other farm workers;
- (e) actual tillers or occupants of public lands;
- (f) collective or cooperatives of the above beneficiaries; and
- (g) others directly working on the land.

Do the Sumilao farmers qualify under this law? Definitely they do. As a matter of fact, most of them were the same farmers who, before the issuance of the conversion order by then Executive Secretary Ruben Torres, had been screened and awarded the Certificate of Land Ownership (CLOA).

It is now more than 10 years since they won and lost their CLOA to an abandoned conversion order. Now they are back to square one, but still hopeful. They are back in the pre-coverage stage and must go through the inclusion/exclusion process after DAR issues the notice of coverage.

Already the contest is unbalanced, David against Goliath. The least that the powerful can do, if they must fight the farmers, is to fight fair. For instance, let the powerful forego the claim that there is a Sanggunian resolution supporting the piggery project. Where is that resolution? What I have seen is an amateurish production of a bogus resolution!

A Blessed New Year!

'Wish Ko Lang'

KRIS-CROSSING MINDANAO

Carlos Isagani T. Zarate



Sadly, though, there are still many places in the country where the Tobacco Regulation Act of 2003 (RA 9211) is not being strictly implemented, such that you can still see insensitive smokers puffing their hearts out, so to speak, in public places, inside public vehicles and in restaurants. In fact, some of those who willfully violate the law are government officials and law enforcers.

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"It's a toy!" And he stomped off, disgusted with my lack of intelligence.

Suffer the little children, indeed.

Hopefully, a better year for everyone

FIRST OF ALL, BELATED HOLIDAY GREETINGS GO TO Sen. Antonio "Sonny" Trillanes IV. I realize he has been the subject of a number of negative news items in the past few days, including an expensive full-page ad from a group calling itself "Kongreso ng... something."

This young man, who has been incarcerated for more than four years with no end in sight, has stood up to powerful forces in the country, speaking out loud about the abuses of a corrupt administration. And apparently, his views—not necessarily his methods—reflect the sentiments of our people. As indicated in the recent poll of Pulse Asia, we are living under the rule of the most corrupt politician in the history of the country. Only a few weeks earlier, Transparency International, a Berlin-based organization, released its Global Corruption Barometer for 2007, showing that the Philippines was No. 10 in the top 10 countries with the highest level of bribery. Cambodia and the Philippines are the only Asian countries in this top 10 list. The study said that "too often, people must part with their hard-earned money to pay for services that should be free. And they do not see enough commitment when they look to their governments and leaders." How can we expect commitment when some of the shadiest deals in the country are cooked up in the highest echelons of government?

Now, those are issues that we ought to get angry about. Instead, we castigate Trillanes who is basically the messenger of bad news which we would rather not hear. In 1989, rebel military units launched the deadliest attack against a highly popular government led by President Cory Aquino. They held the nation's business center, Makati, hostage for almost a week before proudly marching back to their barracks in Fort Bonifacio. Some analysts declared that more harm was done to the economy by this coup attempt than anything else in recent years. The acknowledged leader was Col. Gregorio Honasan.

Guess what? Honasan was elected to the Senate. According to Sen. Aquilino Pimentel, Honasan was also the leader or godfather of the 2003 Oakwood mutiny of which Senator Trillanes was the leading spokesperson.

Guess what? After Honasan was arrested for his suspected involvement in this mutiny, he was allowed to run for the Senate. He won, and today occupies his seat in Congress.

While in government captivity, Sonny Trillanes also ran for the Senate. He won by over 11 million votes. As I mentioned in an earlier column, Trillanes did not engage in *dagdag-bawas* operations. He did not engage in massive vote-buying using the money of the people. He did not take advantage of a fertilizer fund earmarked for our farmers for use in his campaign. He did not have the usual troupe of movie stars and entertainers to attract attention to his cause.

And yet, he defeated administration giants like Mike Defensor, Prospero Pichay, Ralph Recto and better-known personalities like Tito Sotto and Tessie Orta, as well as movie stars Cesar Montano and Richard Gomez.

What does all this mean? It means that we as a people have a soft heart for the rebel. Perhaps it is our personal stamp of defiance, our way of expressing anger and disillusionment with our leaders who continue to fail us. We are willing to take the risk with young, untested but idealistic and reform-oriented individuals, hoping that one day, we will strike gold and come up with someone who will lead us to a better future.

According to television reports, the family of Senator Trillanes was given two additional hours to spend with him on Christmas Day. The usual visitation hours are from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. These were extended to 5 p.m. How thoughtful of the Philippine National Police to extend this bit of comfort to a detained senator on Christmas Day.

By the way, how did convicted rapist Romeo Jalosjos spend Christmas Day? Was he given additional two hours to spend with his family? Or has it been Christmas for much of the year for him and other influential detainees? Even convicted murderers get holiday passes in order to spend a couple of days outside the National Penitentiary with their families. We have one set of rules for rebels who pose a threat to the government and another for rapists and murderers who pose a threat to society but not to the government.

These are difficult days for Senator Trillanes but we all know that Easter Sunday is always preceded by the agony of Good Friday. Keep in mind that many leaders in other countries spent time in captivity before attaining positions of power and influence. Even the recently assassinated Benazir Bhutto was in jail or under different forms of captivity for five years, decided by many of her own countrymen, before becoming the first female prime minister of a Muslim country. I have no doubt that for Trillanes, the years ahead will be better and brighter.

A number of readers have called about Miguel del Prado, the young man with the healing hands. Apparently, in my last column I provided the wrong phone number. Mea culpa! The correct number is 892-6367 and his cell phone is 0917-824-1104.

Next week will be interesting days for the Philippine Air Force. The incumbent, Lt. Gen. Horacio Tolentino, a member of PMA Class 1974 and classmate of AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperson Jr., is due to retire on Feb. 7, 2008, more than a month away.

But the leading candidate for the position, Lt. Gen. Pedrito Cadungog, the current AFP deputy chief of staff is due to retire on Jan. 11, 2009, which means that if Tolentino stays on all the way to Feb. 7, his compulsory retirement date, Cadungog would be short of the one-year requirement for appointment as service commander. For Cadungog to take over as PAF chief per the recommendation of the AFP Board of Generals, it is necessary for Tolentino to retire in the next few days.

This situation is very similar to the case of Vice Adm. Ernesto de Leon of the Philippine Navy, who retired earlier in order to make way for Vice Adm. Mateo Mayuga. If our readers will recall, up to the very last minute, Mayuga was not sure of assuming the Navy post. The rumor was that another officer, close to the powers-that-be, was moving heaven and earth to keep Mayuga from taking over, and hoping that he would be the chosen one.

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Have a safe and happy 2008!

THE LIGHTING OF FIREWORKS and firecrackers during the New Year is a tradition that we inherited from our Chinese ancestors. We have been made to believe that making all those noise will keep us away from bad luck and bad spirits. Fascinating indeed are the varying colors of lights and enjoy-

able are resounding booms of bomb-like firecrackers.

However, too much appreciation of these New Year stuff, plus negligence, could lead us to bad luck—bad luck that we want to avoid. Lives are put at risk for temporary happiness.

Simple is my message. For the

children, learn from what you have seen on television. Never make yourselves the example of hardheadedness. For the grown-ups, grow up!

Let us all have a safe and happy New Year!

—KHEWLE JANE T. VISCA,
khean_meynard@yahoo.com

Sumilao farmers have law and equity on their side

THE SUMILAO FARMERS HAVE received widespread support because law and equity are on their side. Here are facts distorted or evaded by desperate paid advertisements.

1. The farmers respected the 1998 Supreme Court decision on a procedural technicality, even if it violated a cardinal rule that no irrigated land can be converted.

2. The Office of the President revoked that conversion for gross non-compliance. A non-compliant project, no matter its economic merits, cannot be used to circumvent the law because a conversion is an exception to agrarian reform and, unless strictly enforced, opens the door to abuse and corruption.

3. There were enough indicators that should have alerted San Miguel Foods Inc. (SMFI) about the failed conversion and the SMFI lawyers (including a former assistant secretary of the Department of Agrarian Reform) are presumed to know the rules of conversion. If it is true that another 40,000 hectares of land is available to the farmers as an alternative, the same is also available to

SMFI for its project, without the conditionalities of a problematic conversion.

4. It is not true, as SMFI claims, that only share tenants of a specific property are qualified as agrarian reform beneficiaries. Also qualified are agricultural lessees; regular, seasonal and other farmworkers; actual tillers and occupants of public lands; collectives and cooperatives of the above beneficiaries; and others working in the land who are landless residents of the barangay or municipality (RA 6657, Sec. 22).

5. The Sumilao farmers are qualified beneficiaries, both those who received 66 hectares from the adjoining Carlos Estate (an average of 85 hectares for 78 families) and those who have received nothing, because those who own less than three hectares under Sec. 22 can be beneficiaries. (RA 6657 Sec. 25)

We reiterate our unwavering support for the Sumilao farmers and appeal to the giant San Miguel Corp. to stop engaging in a media campaign that misrepresents the issues and the rights of the farmers. The farmers have ob-

served the rule of law and steadfastly limited themselves to peaceful means to call attention to their plight. Please spare them the personal attacks and give them the dignity and respect they deserve.

The heart of our Constitution is social justice. For those who are concerned about development, the experience of progressive countries and empirical studies of our own experience in agrarian reform show unequivocally that when landless farmers become owner-cultivators and are given ample support services, agricultural productivity increases, security problems are reduced, education is enhanced and the outlook for growth improves.

Agrarian reform and economic development are not contradictory but we must also have priorities. A piggery may be a good project, but it is not human development. Please do it somewhere else where the rights of human beings are not sacrificed.

—XAVIER ALPASA, S.J.,
executive director,
Simbahang Lingkod ng Bayan,
www.slb.ph
javieraalpasa@yahoo.com

Erap's, Jalosjos' 'special treatment' shows GMA is a rebel

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO pardoned ousted President Joseph Estrada, a convicted plunderer, commuted the two life sentences of former Rep. Romeo

Jalosjos, a convicted child rapist, to 16 years; and set rebellious (Magdalo) soldiers free. These people are unworthy of such tender mercies.

In these acts, GMA plundered the truth, raped justice and rebelled against sensibilities.

—DANI PAREDES,
acparedes@sympatico.ca

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readersadvocate@inquirer.com.ph

Writers of letters to the editor are requested to include their complete address and telephone or pager number or e-mail address for verification purposes. The Inquirer will not publish any letter unless such information is supplied.



A literary icon with a big heart

IT IS A PITY THAT I WAS NEVER able to personally thank Adrian E. Cristobal for giving me a job as researcher at the Presidential Center for Advanced Studies in 1980.

I was at the time a freshman at the College of Law of the University of Santo Tomas, and I wanted to have a job to augment my allowance from my family. Adrian was then the presidential spokesman and I told him in my letter that I spearheaded in 1975 the petition for the restoration of the school paper of UP Iloilo and presented the petition to UP president Salvador E. Lopez who was then in Iloilo City.

After a few months, Lopez directed Dean Manuel to cause the revival of the school paper, and I became its first editor in chief having topped the competitive examinations for editorship. It was the first student paper restored in the Visayas and Mindanao during the early years of martial law, and the only paper in the South to publish Lopez's critical piece titled "The Philippines under Martial Law."

I also told Adrian that I came to know of the assistance he extended to writers who have been detained, and I told him I was looking for a job in Manila.

A few days after I mailed the letter, I received a telegram from poet Cirilo P. Bautista to report for work at the PCAS.

Although I did not stay long at the PCAS because I returned to the Visayas, I will always be indebted to Adrian Cristobal and will always be in awe of the bigness of his heart—he speedily responded to my plea although I was a complete stranger to him, and he will always be my type of literary icon: a man of letters in the high echelon of the State (like Andre Malraux, the French philosopher-bureaucrat).

—EDWARD B. CONTRERAS,
presiding judge,
Regional Trial Court,
Branch 17, Roxas City

Clarification on Taal Lake's fish cages

PLEASE ALLOW US TO CLARIFY certain facts in the article "Fish cages rise near danger zone at Taal Volcano" (Inquirer, 12/11/07).

Please note that during its meeting last Nov. 14, the Protected Areas Management Board (PAMB) did not approve "a resolution ... to include the island in the Taal Lake's fish cage zones." Rather, a consensus was reached to consider the request of two barangays (Tabla and San Isidro) under the municipality of Talusay, Batangas to be included in the fish cage zone, based on the Unified Rules and Regulations (URR) for fisheries development.

However, two days later, during a press conference immediately following a tree planting activity at Volcano Island, Environment Secretary Lito Atienza called for the phasing out of existing fish cages in the lake within two years.

Under Sec. 10 of Republic Act 7586, also known as the National Integrated Protected Areas System (NIPAS) Act, the environment secretary is empowered to enforce policies that will preserve and control activities that may threaten the ecological balance in protected areas.

The secretary's directive is in line with the agency's mandate to promote the preservation of Taal Lake, which is the Calabarzon's largest protected area, and to protect the endemic fish species that make the lake its natural habitat. However, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the PAMB are aware that the fish cages provide livelihood to

majority of the communities surrounding the lake, and are willing to study possible alternative livelihood for those who may be affected by the directive.

During the same meeting, the PAMB executive committee did agree to draft a resolution requesting the environment secretary to further review the URR. To date, no such resolution has been drafted and submitted to the DENR.

We hope to have clarified the issue in the spirit of balanced and fair journalism.

—EDUARDO B. PRINCIPLE,
Ceso 4, officer in charge,
regional executive director,
Department of Environment
and Natural Resources-
Calabarzon Region

A tape recording of the PAMB meeting last Nov. 14 would prove that the PAMB executive committee did pass a resolution that would include the Taal Volcano Island in Talusay among the fish cage zones of Taal Lake. The resolution was filed, through a motion, by Talusay Mayor Florencio Manimtim, and was duly seconded by Leah Villanueva, chair of PAMB Subcommittee on Fisheries.

Representatives of the environmental non-government organization who were present in that meeting have also clarified to this writer that the resolution was approved "verbally."

I do not know, however, whether written documents of the resolution have reached the DENR office.

—MARLON ALEXANDER LUISTRO,
correspondent,
Inquirer Southern Luzon

'Educational' visits to malls, TV shows?

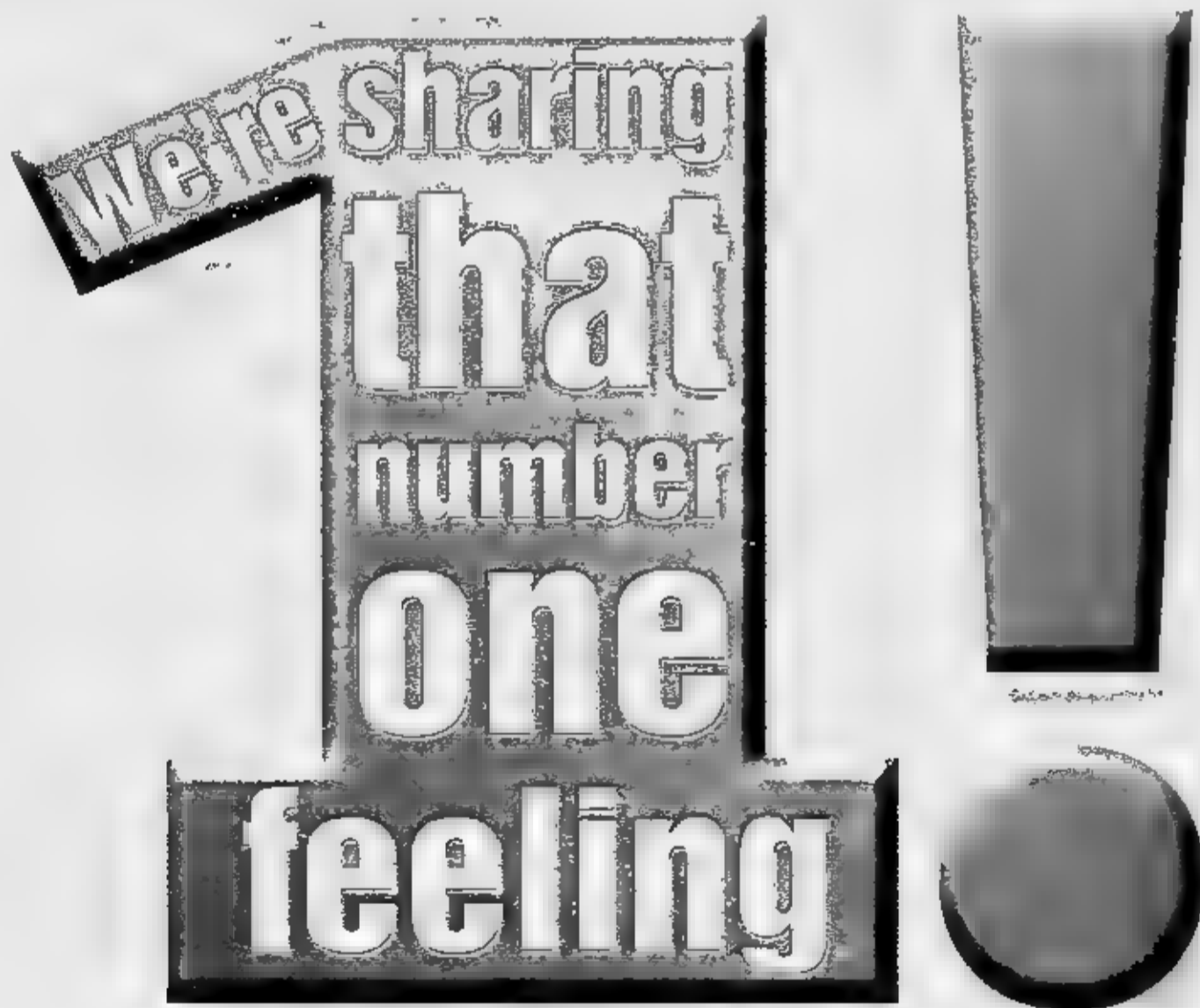
MAY I THANK MICHAEL L. TAN for writing about the "The rise and rise of the mall" (Inquirer, 12/2/07) I agree with every single word he wrote.

Of late, I've also noticed that some schools now consider a visit to the mall to be part of an "educational field trip." I have seen many buses, with banners proclaiming "University of So and So" in the parking lots of malls. Most of

these schools are in the provinces. I don't know what is educational about visiting malls, save for the sheer sizes of the malls. If the students are studying architecture, then it might make sense to visit one.

Also, I have noticed that schools consider an excursion to a TV show "educational." Really now.

—MAY AGARAN,
may.agaran@gmail.com



Informing and inspiring Filipino readers for more than two decades through balanced news and fearless views, the Philippine Daily Inquirer has undoubtedly become the country's number 1 newspaper. Our heartfelt thanks for making the Inquirer a part of your daily reading habit!

As we celebrate our 22nd anniversary, Inquirer grants 22 loyal readers their wishes - from an exciting wish like meeting your local idol to a romantic one like celebrating your 25th wedding anniversary in a beach resort. Let us know what you really want in 300 words or less, tell us

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Regional Office
Marketing Department
Philippine Daily Inquirer
1000 EDSA Road, Alabang
City of Muntinlupa and Marikina
Metro Manila City 1204

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US toxic waste victims get Panlilio help

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—FILIPINOS WHO claimed they were made ill by exposure to toxic wastes left by the United States military at the former Clark Air Base have found another ally in Pampanga Gov. Eddie Panlilio.

This happened as the People's Task Force for Bases Cleanup (PTFBC) signed a memorandum of agreement with Panlilio for a support program for victims during the group's general assembly at the Parish of the Lord's Resurrection at the Madapdap resettlement site in Mabalacat town on Friday.

Nelia Carreon, PTFBC-Clark coordinator, said she was surprised when she realized that

Panlilio was the same priest who frequented the evacuation center at the Clark Air Base Command (Cabcom) in 1992 when Mt. Pinatubo's lahar swamped the northern villages of Mabalacat.

Previous role

Panlilio was then the executive director of the Archdiocese of San Fernando's Social Action Center of Pampanga that facili-

tated relief operations and livelihood projects for Cabcom evacuees.

Myra Baldonado, PTFBC national coordinator, said more than 20,000 families who stayed at Cabcom until 1998 were exposed to the "deadly toxics."

The defunct Mount Pinatubo Commission had closed Cabcom that year to stop exposing people there to health risks.

The decision came after the Department of Health's National Poison Control found high levels of arsenic in the blood samples taken from 47 pairs of children and mothers, including Carreon.

These, Baldonado said, indicated that the water and soil at Cabcom were contaminated with heavy metals.

Seeing Panlilio Carreon said "We are very hopeful."

Baldonado and Panlilio said the support program would be finalized in January, but medical help, especially for those seriously ill, would be a priority.

300 deaths

Over 300 victims around Clark and Subic had died from mostly cancer since 1997. Of the more than 100 cases being monitored, the PTFBC helped only half of them on the assistance of some senators, local of-

ficials and private donors.

"Cabcom was identified as a former motor pool of the United States Air Force. While US military guidance directs base commanders to report the environmental situation of closing bases to the next tenants, Cabcom's former use was not declared as a contaminated site," Baldonado said.

She said the Weston International report in 1997, which identified the presence of mercury in drinking water, was not reported to the evacuees or to agencies like the Department of Social Welfare and Development that administered Cabcom.

The PTFBC was formed in

1992 after the US General Accounting Office, the auditing arm of the US Congress, admitted "widespread contamination in the Clark and Subic bases" in a report.

"When you were transferred inside Clark, we thought that you would be safe. I was so sad to hear that you were doubly affected by the toxics left behind by the US bases," Panlilio told some 1,000 former Cabcom occupants.

He has designated a staffer in his office to work closely with the PTFBC in finalizing the support program. The provincial board, he said, will be consulted on the program. *Tonette Oresjas, Inquirer Central Luzon*

This 'Trillanes' packs power for New Year, but sale is banned

By Carmela Reyes
Inquirer Central Luzon

BOCAUE, BULACAN—IF THE Nov. 29 Peninsula Manila stand-off led by detained Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV failed to make a noise, trust this "Trillanes" to supply the fireworks. Literally.

Some firecracker and pyrotechnic manufacturers in this so-called firecracker capital of the Philippines have been secretly offering to patrons the "Trillanes," a stronger and louder type of product not found on display shelves of outlets here.

The "Trillanes," which appears like the "fountain" type product but packs more noise, is 12 inches long and 8.5 centimeters in diameter.

Namesake

Its manufacturers named the product after the senator and Navy official who led the Nov. 29 standoff at the Peninsula Manila bore and the failed 2003 Oakwood mutiny, both in Makati City.

Its makers, however, label the product with the generic "Special" to avoid attracting attention as it is a banned product. It retails at P250.

Regalado Reyes, 51, a resident of Quezon City, said he bought two pieces for the New Year revelry. He said a stall owner here informed him that they were selling the product.

He said the stall owner asked him not to use the product indoors and light it only in a vacant area away from people and residential areas.

Reyes said the "Trillanes" is being sold only to people looking for "stronger" products, like the banned firecrackers "Bin Laden Bomb" and "Goodbye Philippines."

Terror names

The "Bin Laden Bomb" firecracker, which was made here in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in the United States on Sept. 11, 2001, and the "Goodbye Philippines" are cheaper, at P150 to P200 apiece.

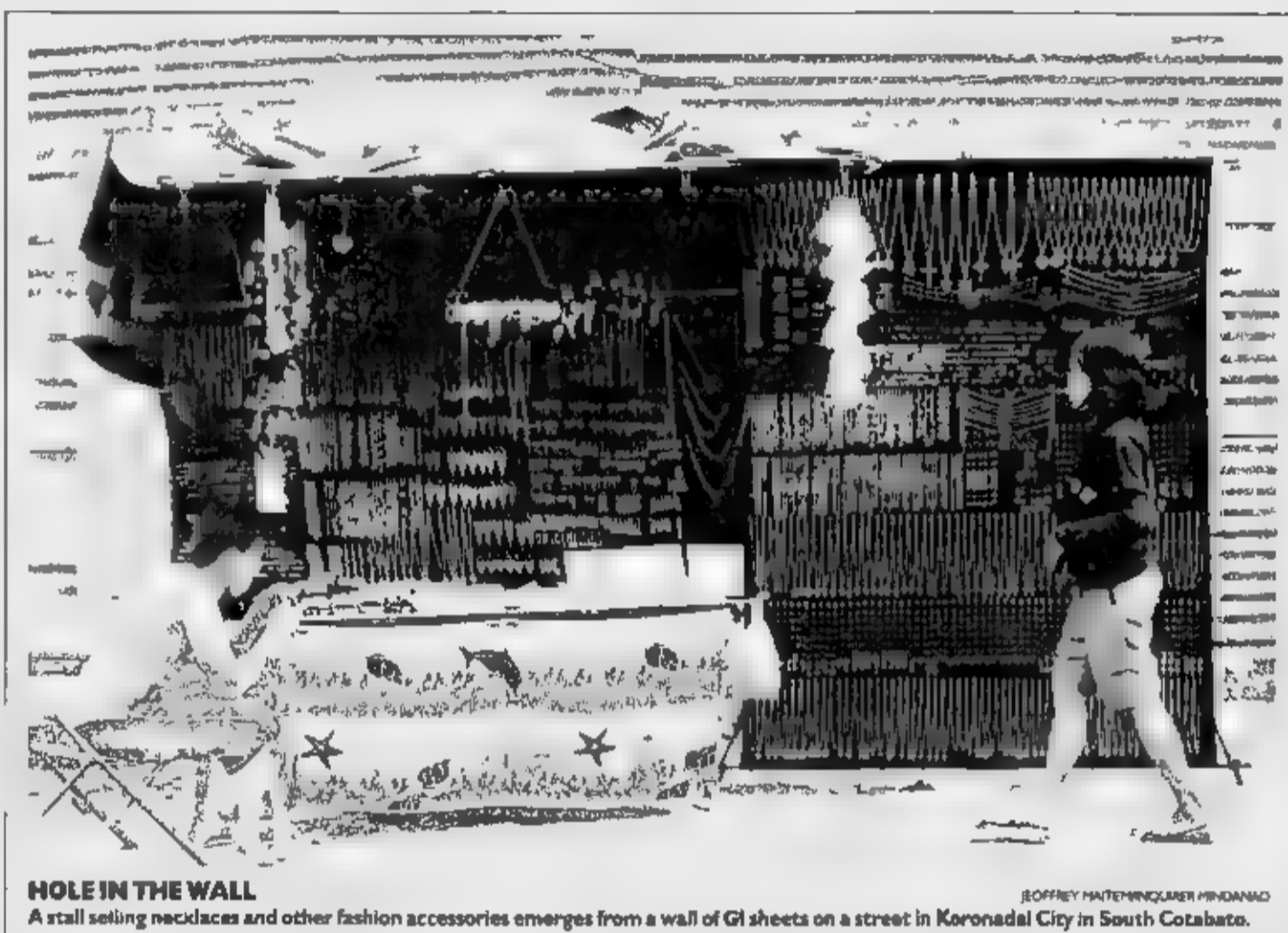
Celso Enriquez, owner of the Uni-Star Fireworks in Barangay Turo here, said the "Trillanes" is double the size of the "Bin Laden Bomb" and "Goodbye Philippines," which are the sizes of a canned soft drink.

Enriquez, however, clarified that he was not selling the "Trillanes" or any of the banned products. He said many unlicensed manufacturers trade in this type of firecracker.

He said policemen last week confiscated illegal products, including the "Bin Laden Bomb" and "Goodbye Philippines," so many customers were looking for other "extra strong" firecrackers.

This led some manufacturers to produce the "Trillanes" to satisfy the demand, he said.

"Many Filipinos want to try what is prohibited... they find thrill in doing what is considered forbidden—be it on food that you should not eat or a romantic affair," Enriquez said.



HOLE IN THE WALL

A stall selling necklaces and other fashion accessories emerges from a wall of GI sheets on a street in Koronadal City in South Cotabato.

Lucena 'boga' makers, buyers go underground

LUCENA CITY—A POLICE campaign has driven makers and buyers of a banned improvised no-se-making device to go underground to continue the trade in what has come to be known as "boga," street lingo for gun.

A local boga maker, who talked on condition he not be identified for fear of getting

caught, said he manufactures boga only when orders are placed for these.

He said fear of getting caught has forced him to stop preparing these devices ahead.

He said the prevailing prices of boga range from P400 to P600.

Boga is made out of PVC pipes. It gives out an explosion

from methyl alcohol kept at the tail end of the pipes.

The alcohol content is shaken to create a vapor and a trigger made from disposable lighter is activated to produce a bang.

The use of the device has led to serious eye injuries in the past.

Supt. Ronaldo Genaro Ylagan, Lucena City police chief,

has ordered policemen to patrol the city streets to prevent the illegal sale of firecrackers.

Guns of policemen in the city were also covered with tapes to prevent their use during the New Year celebration.

Gun firing has led to deaths in previous New Year revelries. *Delfin T. Mallari Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon*

GMA 1st leader in La Union Rizal Day rites

SAN FERNANDO CITY—PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo on Sunday recorded a historic first in this city when she led the 111th Rizal Day celebration here.

"This is the first time that the President made the flag raising and wreath laying on the monument of (Dr. Jose) Rizal outside Metro Manila and Baguio," said Mayor Pablo Ortega.

It was also the first time that a Philippine president attended a Rizal Day celebration in La Union, according to Gov. Manuel Ortega.

"And this is a very great honor and historic for the province," he said.

Why San Fernando?

Ms Arroyo arrived here from Baguio City at 7:50 a.m. and was given arrival honors by Philippine Military Academy cadets. She then greeted local officials and heads of government agencies here.

After the flag-raising ceremony, Ms Arroyo, who was accompanied by Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Espenon Jr., laid a wreath at the foot of the Rizal monument in front of the City Hall here.

Mayor Ortega said nobody knew why Ms Arroyo decided to attend the Rizal Day celebration here.

"I asked the President's staff why she chose San Fernando.

They said she just decided that she wanted to do the wreath laying and flag raising here," he said in Filipino.

Rush job

Despite the short notice, Mayor Ortega said they were happy that the celebration was held here. "We had to work 48 hours para magapaganda natin yong plaza natin, mapinturahan yong estatwa (to beautify our plaza, had the statue painted)," Mayor Ortega said.

"The result was good and we were told the President was happy," he said.

Governor Ortega said Ms Arroyo did not deliver a speech because she was in a hurry to return to Baguio "for another engagement."

"But then, ang message lang naman diyan, e, (the only message there is) let us emulate Jose Rizal so that our nation will move forward," he said.

The last time Ms Arroyo delivered a Rizal Day speech was in Baguio City in 2002, when she announced that she would not run in the 2004 presidential election to foster unity in the country.

Ten months later, however, Ms Arroyo declared before an assembly of senior citizens at the Expo Pilipino in Pampanga that she would run for president in the following year's elections.

After the ceremony on Sun-

day, Ms Arroyo went to the La Union provincial capitol to have breakfast with local officials.

"We did not talk about politics. We are on vacation, we are on a holiday, so, no politics," said Governor Ortega.

"Malayo pa naman ang eleksyon, e, 2010 pa yan (The elections is still years away). So, it's too early to be politicking. Our drive now is to preserve and do what is necessary for the country and for our province of La Union," he said.

"She did not also promise anything but she said she wanted that our international airport here will be completed," said Mayor Ortega.

In Baguio City, leaders of a sect that worships Rizal gathered at Rizal Park in the city at 7 a.m., hoping to meet Ms Arroyo.

Apolonio Soriano of the Iglesia Pilipino Karolika Pilipinas Luma at Bagong Henerasyon said they visited the park during the times Ms Arroyo led the Rizal Day celebration in Baguio.

Eusebio Aviles, one of the church's elders, said they call themselves "alipin ng diyos na si Rizal (servants or slaves of god Rizal)," and have been preaching the national hero's mystical origins for decades at a small community here. *Reports from Gabriel Cardinosa, Vincent Cabrera and Desiree Calusa, Inquirer Northern Luzon*



MS ARROYO during the flag-raising ceremony at the celebration of the 111th anniversary of the martyrdom of Dr. Jose Rizal in San Fernando, La Union.

LYN MILLON

Talk of US intervention prompts Sulu meetings

ZAMBOANGA CITY—A US military spokesperson denied reports that American soldiers in Zamboanga town in Sulu have been preventing health workers from operating the district hospital there at night.

Dr. Silak Lakkian, Zamboanga District Hospital chief, earlier said the American soldiers—led by a MSgt. Ronburg—have started implementing the order on Nov. 30 without offering any reason.

She said a team of soldiers barged into the hospital, which is some 45 kilometers from here, on Nov. 30 and told the chief nurse to close it not later than 6 p.m.

Threats

Lakkian said the American soldiers had threatened to shoot anybody seen inside the hospital's premises after that time.

But Lt. Commander Melissa Scheurmann, the public affairs officer of the Joint Special Operations Task Force Philippines based in this city, denied the report.

"All those (pieces of) information are pure allegations and that allegation is not true," she said.

She said Sulu Gov. Abdulakur Tan has ordered an investigation of the report.



AMERICAN soldiers mingle with Filipino troops in Zamboanga, Sulu. The town is considered a high-risk area for US forces following clashes in the past between government soldiers and followers of MNLF leader Habier Malik.

investigation of the report

Scheurmann also said she still has to look into reports quoting a soldier named MSgt. Ronburg.

"Personally, I don't know, I

still have to look into that and that name is unfamiliar," she said.

Summoned

On Saturday, Hadja Janab

Abdulmajid, Sulu disaster coordinator, said Governor Tan has called on Lakkian and a certain Major Walker for a meeting.

"Andito sila ngayon, gusto kasi ni governor na magkaroon

ng harap-harapan na usapan at ma-thresh out itong problema (They're here now because the governor wants a face-to-face meeting and for this problem to be threshed out)," Abdulmajid said.

"She is consistent in her position. In fact, she again mentioned the name of Ronburg and reported it to his superior, Major Walker, especially the shoot to kill order," Abdulmajid said, adding that it was unlikely for Lakkian to invent stories.

"Lakkian is one of the respected health officials in the province," Abdulmajid said.

Embassy words

Rebecca Thompson, spokesperson of the US Embassy in Manila, said "the US government has had no role in any discussions or decision about the opening hours of the Zamboanga District Hospital."

"US soldiers have not been involved in keeping the hospital closed or open," Thompson said in a text message to the INQUIRER.

Lakkian said she was really surprised about the order.

"I thought these Americans are here for humanitarian purposes. Our hospital caters

to all the indigents in the town who cannot afford the transportation expense to the Sulu Provincial Hospital," she said.

Lakkian said they found that the American soldiers were serious when they tried to turn off the generator set in the evening of Dec. 2.

She said she got a call from Ronburg asking her to turn off the generator.

American orders

"My two staffers were instructed by phone to get through the kitchen door to the genset with their left hands on their heads. After they were able to put off the genset, they were instructed to get back immediately," Lakkian, who was at the hospital at that time, said.

Lakkian said in the morning, she immediately went to Zamboanga Mayor Abdugafur Abdurajak "because I could not bear it anymore."

"It is useless to stay here because we cannot do anything," she said.

As of Friday evening, the hospital remained close at night as staffers are afraid to defy the order, Lakkian said. *Julie S. Alpala with reports from Ed General, Inquirer Mindanao*

Justice eludes kin of former vice mayor 1 yr after his slay

ROXAS CITY—THE WIDOW OF former Tapaz Vice Mayor Victor Gardose yesterday lamented that justice remained elusive exactly a year ago yesterday since the former town official and his two companions were gunned down.

Gardose's widow, Rosemarie, despite her now being the incumbent mayor of Tapaz, lamented that the family was still nowhere near finding the mastermind of the murder of her husband and his two companions, Canda village chief Leonardo Gemino and the vice mayor's bodyguard Anton Gequillo.

The late vice mayor, Gemino and Gequillo were about to attend the coronation of a fiesta queen of Barangay Taft on Dec. 30, 2006, when three unidentified armed men shot them outside the barangay hall.

So far, only one suspect, Noel Fuentespina, has been charged with multiple murder in a case now pending at the Regional Trial Court (RTC) Branch 20 in Mambusao, Capiz.

At large

But Fuentespina, the driver of former Capiz provincial board member Ronald Exumando, has remained at large.

Witnesses also identified a Manuel "Boy" Beasisa, 44, as a possible suspect in the murders. He has not been charged.

Beasisa, a frustrated murder suspect who escaped from the Capiz provincial jail in 1985, was arrested in Manila last July and is now held at the Capiz Rehabilitation Center due to several pending cases not related to the Gardose murder.

Beasisa has denied any involvement in the Gardose murder.

Until Fuentespina is arrested, no one would know for sure who masterminded the killings, police had earlier said.

Mayor Gardose, for her part, said that she and the families of Gemino and Gequillo would just continue to hope that the truth would eventually come out and justice would prevail.

Politics

The mayor said she would organize a first death anniversary commemoration rites for her late husband, Gemino and Gequillo on Jan. 19, 2008, so that their town mates would not forget that justice has not yet been found.

Mayor Gardose said she believed that the killing of her husband, who was planning to run for town mayor before he was killed, was politically motivated.

Mrs. Gardose eventually decided to run for mayor and won. *Pelipe V. Celino, Inquirer Visayas*



LUCKY OBJECTS

Fruit vendors in Legazpi City take advantage of an expected surge in the sale of round fruits as many Filipinos cling to the belief that such objects could bring good luck in the New Year.

NIÑO JESUS ORBETAN/INQUIRER NORTHERN LUZON

NPAs wound Marine in Palawan town ambush

PUERTO PRINCESA—SUSPECTED New People's Army (NPA) rebels ambushed the 29th Marine Company in Taytay town in Palawan and wounded one of the Marines while a member of the barangay council was shot dead in a separate attack by the rebels in Pangasinan town in Catanduanes, reports said yesterday.

The Marine was wounded af-

ter the NPA rebels ambushed a military convoy along a main road in Taytay town Saturday night.

The attack happened barely two weeks after ranking military officials declared stepped up offensives against communist rebels who killed three Marines in an ambush in the nearby town of San Vicente last Dec. 16.

Senior Supt. Dennis Peña, Palawan police director, declined to give the identity of the wounded soldier, who reportedly suffered "superficial wounds," in deference to military protocol.

In Catanduanes, a member of the barangay council was shot dead by suspected NPA members Saturday night in Pangasinan town, some 56 kilometers from the capital town of Virac.

Senior Supt. Francisco B. Peñaflor Jr. identified the slain barangay official as Santos Soler, 50, resident of the coastal village of Cagdarao located 10 km away from the town proper.

Geraldford Ticke, Marlon Ramos and Fernan Ganan, Inquirer Southern Luzon

Slain Davao City broadcaster buried

DAVAO CITY—MURDERED broadcaster Ferdie Lintuan was buried yesterday.

His killing was not likely to be solved soon despite the arrest of a suspect.

Jan Marc Lintuan, 20, the eldest son of the broadcaster, refused to comment on the arrest of 31-year-old suspect Oliver Antoc, whom police tagged as the gunman.

"The case is not solved until the mastermind is identified," the younger Lintuan told the INQUIRER. Antoc was buying roasted chicken in La Verza Hills Subdivision when arrested by police.

In a lineup, two witnesses pointed to Antoc as the alleged gunman, but a third witness contradicted the two.

Lintuan was gunned down Dec. 24, shortly after leaving DXGO radio station on R. Castillo Street. He bought block time in the radio station for his program in which he had criticized Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte.

Lucio Ceniza, a fellow broadcaster who was with Lintuan in his car during the attack, said an official from the Department of Justice called him to say that one of the key witnesses could not positively identify Antoc as the gunman.

"It's not yet certain if indeed the arrested person was the real culprit," Ceniza said.

Dante Jimenez, chair of the Volunteers Against Crime and Corruption, a civic group, said he had a meeting with Chief Supt. Andres Caro, Southern Mindanao police chief, and advised authorities to "be cautious not to be intimidated by political pressures."

"It must be a solid case so that it can withstand court proceedings," Jimenez said.

He said he has received a death threat through text message telling him to keep off the Lintuan case. *Dennis Jay Santos, Rizalene Acac and Joselle Badilla, Inquirer Mindanao*



FERDIE Lintuan's eldest son reads an eulogy for his father as the murdered broadcaster's remains are buried at a memorial park in Davao City.

Mayor prepares suit vs actress in custody war over love child

By Carla P. Gomez
Inquirer Visayas

BACOLOD CITY—PULUPANDAN Mayor Magdaleno Peña on Friday said he would file four criminal cases against his former live-in partner, Marie Roxanne "Pinky" Recto, and her lawyer for showing the picture of his 3-year-old son and naming him on TV.

Peña said the act of Recto and her lawyer, Evalyn Ursua, in exposing his son on national TV endangers the boy's life. He said he would file the cases at the regional trial court either in Manila or in Negros Occidental.

But Ursua said Peña is "just desperate."

Diversion

"Peña knows that his having gone into hiding is in violation of the Supreme Court and he is trying to divert attention away from it. It is a classic tactic," Ursua said.

On Dec. 3, the SC ordered Peña to turn over the child to Recto pending appeal. The SC has yet to rule on where the custody trial for the child would be held.

Peña has refused to turn over the boy, saying his son is in danger of being kidnapped by the New People's Army (NPA) if he is in the custody of Recto.

He has survived an ambush by the NPA last May 30. The NPA missed him, but killed his bodyguards. The guerrillas said there would always be a next time.

TV exposure

Peña said the showing of the face of the boy and naming him on national TV is in violation of Republic Act No. 9262 (Anti-Violence Against Women and Children Act), the Custody Law, the Child and Youth Welfare Code and the Revised Penal Code, which carries a penalty of about 20 years imprisonment each for Recto and Ursua.

"They did not find the child by showing his picture on national TV because we are abroad. I am so irked by Ursua's exposing my son to the danger of kidnapping. I am seriously considering leaving him with my friends abroad for his safety and go home by myself," Peña said.

He said he is on leave as mayor of Pulupandan until Jan. 17 in order to protect his son.

Peña also explained that a continued stay with him would not endanger his son since he has ample security provided by the Army and police.

Filipino healing priest does so 'many miracles'

From page A1

continues to amaze, baffle and bring hope and joy through his ministry that has seen the healing of countless sick and infirm in many parts of the world, including the Philippines.

"It is not me," he says casually. He is convinced that he is just a channel for God's healing power.

The soft-spoken Suarez, a 2007 TOYM (The Outstanding Young Men) awardee for religious service, projects an ordinariness that is both pleasant and endearing. His boyish looks do not easily reveal "what God has wrought" through him. He does not have an electrifying aura nor does he shriek and shout to slay evil elements like some Bible-thumping televangelists do. Suarez goes about it gently, in his own soothing way, touching, praying over people, pleading for healing. And because he wants everything centered in the Eucharist, he always begins with a Holy Mass.

Like in the Bible

Miraculous healing continues to happen. People who have been assisting him for some time have witnessed the impossible.

Businessman Greg Montecarlo of Couples for Christ-Gawad Kalunga has seen it all. "Except the raising of the dead," he says. "But the deaf hear, the blind see, the lame walk—all that is told in the Bible—I have seen it happen."

In Bulacan, Montecarlo narrates, there was this young boy who was born with practically no bones. "He was soft—like jellyfish. I was holding him in my arms when Father Suarez prayed over him. I myself felt the bones grow inside the boy's body and suddenly there he was—walking."

How does one explain that?

"My own problem here is that I have seen so many miracles, it has become so common to me," Montecarlo says.

Not that he is complaining.

Journalist and documentarist Bernardo Lopez has his own share of miracle stories to tell and he continues to use his video camera to capture moments that he hopes would convince many of what God is doing through Suarez. He has avidly followed the priest and has uploaded images on YouTube which have been getting thousands of hits.

Boy from Butong

Born in 1967 (he turns 41 in February) in Barrio Butong in Taal, Batangas, Suarez grew up like most boys. (Taal's antique basilica is touted as the biggest in the Far East. It is also known for the miraculous Virgin of Caysasay.)

His father, Cervando, drove a tricycle and his mother, the former Azucena Mortel, was a seamstress. The eldest of four children (he has a sister and two brothers), he attended public schools.

"We weren't a particularly religious family," he says. "Our family attended Mass maybe three times a year."

At an early age, Suarez already knew how to earn a living. At 12 he rented out inflatables at Butong beach.

Healing at 16

Something happened when Suarez was 16. He came upon a paralyzed woman and took pity on her. "Naawa lang ako (I took pity on her)." He found himself praying over her and suddenly the woman was walking. He did not know what to make of it and did not talk about it much. It must have been discomfiting to a lad his age. Looking back, it all seemed so natural. But at that time, announcing it to the world was far from Suarez's mind.

What was beginning to concern him was the call to the priesthood or religious life. "I didn't respond. I didn't know a priest." How, where, when? He was waiting for cues and signs, but until they came, he just lived one day at a time, pursuing what needed to be done. He kept the call to himself, nurtured it "until lumago (it flourished)."

Going to the seminary was not an immediate option. Suarez went to Manila and graduated with a chemical engineering degree at Adamson University which is run by the Vincentian Fathers.

Mary appears

After college, Suarez entered the Franciscan Order (Conventuals). "After one-and-a-half years, I left. Then I joined the SVD (Society of the Divine Word) but I was asked to leave after six months."

It was there, at the SVD Christ the King Seminary that, Suarez says, the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to him. "She told me that I would go to a far away place which was cold and windy, and there proclaim the word of God."

Suarez was in his late 20s when he met a French-Canadian student and tourist named Mark Morin who invited him to Canada and even paid for his fare. They could have been partners in a business venture but Suarez wanted to pursue the priesthood. That was 1996.

He again tried the Diocese of Winnipeg to study as a diocesan priest but again, it did not work out and he was made to leave.

"I was an expensive venture, they said," he says, chucking. "They'd have to spend four-and-a-half years on me." They preferred already ordained Fil-



TYPICAL SCENE OF A SUAREZ SESSION Believers are slain by the Spirit, the "deaf hear, the blind see, the lame walk ... I have seen so many miracles..." says an eyewitness. PDI PHOTO FILE

ipino diocesan priests who were seeking a life abroad.

Companions of the Cross

And then he met priests of the Companions of the Cross (a Canadian congregation founded in the 1980s) and here he has stayed since. Because he had had previous religious formation and studies in philosophy and theology, it did not take long for Suarez to be ordained.

"I was ordained in 2002 when I was 35," he says, "and I am the only one who was assigned to go worldwide soon after ordination."

His superiors were aware of and recognized his gift and set him free to reach out to the world.

"I was nonchalant about all these. There was no pressure. I acted upon obedience and not on what I wanted. Remember, I had kept this gift for 20 years," he says.

Abroad

Suarez's gift of healing first became known abroad and only later in the Philippines. He has visited many countries, some of them poor, like Uganda where he walked among refugees, orphans, people sick with AIDS, malaria and yellow fever and afflicted with evil spirits.

Fr. Jeff Shannon who accompanies Suarez on his trips recalls their bout with restless orphaned girls in Uganda.

"As they approached us for prayer after the Mass, they rested in the Spirit for hours, then cried, wailed

and screamed as the Holy Spirit moved in to free and to heal [them]. After three hours of struggle they were delivered and they became as peaceful as doves, full of love. As they sang and danced their way back to their residence, they witnessed their dormitory light up inside, even though it was late at night and there was no electricity. One girl was healed of blindness."

Miracle stories are recorded in the newsletter of Mary Mother of the Poor Healing Ministry, a foundation Suarez established to help the suffering poor.

Mary Mother of the Poor

Eight years ago, while praying, Suarez had a vision where he saw Jesus talking to graces upon him. He also saw poor children asking for help. He couldn't understand the vision's meaning at that time.

During a visit to the Philippines some years ago, 10 poor children approached him to ask for support for their studies. Suarez sent them money and as time went by, more support came from friends who shared his vision. Support came from Austria, Canada, USA, Germany, Japan, Italy, England, Switzerland, Uganda and the Philippines. This gave rise to the Mary Mother of the Poor Foundation (MMP) which aims to help the poor through better shelter, counseling and other programs, by coordinating with health and social services in order to help the sick and the aging, by teaching the tenets of the Catholic faith and by providing programs to

help the youth become good citizens.

As high as Statue of Liberty

Soon to become the center of Suarez's healing ministry is Montemaria (Matuko Point) in the outskirts of Batangas City. Set on a hill on 20 hectares of land, the center of the Oratory of the Blessed Virgin at Montemaria will have chapels, prayer gardens, Stations of the Cross, retreat houses, campsites, lodging houses, a center for the poor and even a replica of Mary house in Ephesus (ancient city in Turkey). The place is meant to draw pilgrims who want to renew their faith.

The Montemaria centerpiece is the 33-story-high statue of Mary Mother of the Poor which will be about as high as the Statue of Liberty and higher than Christ the Redeemer of Brazil. It will face the sea between Batangas and Mindoro, known to be one of the world's richest in marine biodiversity.

The scale model was unveiled last August with Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Cardinal Rosales and Lipa Archbishop Ramon Arguelles in attendance.

There are claims that the stones on Montemaria have caused healing for the sick and people have started going to the place to find out for themselves.

40-hour-vigil Jan. 11-13

Nestor Mangio, one of the architects and an avid supporter of Suarez, says the oratory is scheduled to be finished in September 2008. The project is not wanting in donors. In July, the Companions of the Cross, the congregation to which Suarez belongs, will put up a foundation in the Philippines.

A 40-hour vigil is scheduled from Jan. 11-13 and pilgrims are expected to come in droves. Suarez will be there.

And how does the healing priest relax? "I do sports, I love nature, I love talking to people. I read the spiritual classics—St. Augustine, Francis de Sales. I also like Thomas Merton," he says.

Has the surge of the crowds affected him? "Wala sa akin 'yun. (That's nothing to me.)" He thinks people can easily approach him because "I am not threatening." After Mass, he says, he prays and "this saves me."

"I would like to think that after I've passed through this world, I'd have made a dent."

For now, the words of Jesus to the suffering are enough to inspire him. "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28).

(For more info visit www.fatherfernando.com or www.montemaria-shrine.com)

Pray for, be kind to all God's animals, Church urged

From page A1

their meat consumption during the holidays, not just for health reasons but also out of compassion for animals that are cruelly slaughtered for the traditional media noche (midnight meal) feast.

The beef, pork or chicken they're enjoying had their "throats slit, limbs hacked off and skin torn from their bodies while still conscious. Pigs were plunged into vats of scalding water for hair removal while still conscious and chickens were scalded alive in feather removal tanks," says Rochelle Regodon, campaigns manager of Peta-Asia Pacific.

They should also reduce, if not totally forego, the use of ear-splitting firecrackers to avoid stressing their pets. A dog's hearing—as well as a cat's—is 10 times more sensitive than a human's.

Violent places on earth

Peta says slaughterhouses are among "the most violent places on Earth ... it's ironic that the celebration of the [birth] of the Son of God is a feast of slaughtered pigs, cows, chicken and animal flesh."

"In Jesus' time, animal sacrifice was largely an excuse for people to eat animal flesh, and Jesus challenged the practice at every turn. He drove the merchants selling animals for sacrifice and consumption from the temple, instituted baptism in place of animal sacrifice, saying that God 'requires mercy, not sacrifice.' He also rejected both animal flesh and sacrifice at the Last Supper—a vegetarian Passover meal," notes Regodon.

Ramona Eliza T. Consunji, external affairs officer of the Animal Welfare Coalition, says that there are "references on the rights and welfare of animals found in the Bible. The connection between cruelty to animals and

Tips for an animal-friendly New Year celebration

- **KEEP YOUR COMPANION ANIMALS** indoors and in a familiar room, with sufficient food and water. Frightened animals comfort themselves by hiding under a bed or in a closet, so owners are advised not to force their pets to come out until after the New Year noise has died down. Make sure the room is safe, the curtains are drawn and windows and doors are closed.
- Play soothing music to keep them calm.
- Take your dogs for a walk before the celebrations begin on New Year's Eve to tire them out so they would sleep through the noise from firecrackers going off.
- Don't light firecrackers near an animal shelter or a zoo. Animals in caged environments are already unsettled because of their unnatural

surroundings. Noise and smoke would cause them to panic, and they could hurt themselves. Also, the pollution caused by firecrackers could be harmful for the animals.

- If you are going away for the holidays, take your animal companions with you or leave them with someone who is sensitive to their needs and will keep them safe. Never leave them alone while you are away.
- If your animal companions are prone to anxiety, talk to your vet. They may be able to prescribe something to help keep them calm. It's a good idea to move your companion animal's sleeping area closer to you to boost its confidence during this stressful time.
- Don't forget the dogs and cats who have made homes in your neighborhood. Lure them into safe areas

with food and keep them there. Allow them to use your garage or shed for a few days to keep them away from harm.

- If you see children tying a firecracker to an animal's tail or throwing a firecracker at an animal, stop them immediately!
- If your building has security guards, tell them to keep an eye out for animals in distress and to inform you immediately. If you see animals who seem lost or confused, lure them to a safe place with food and water. Give them refuge in your home or bring them to a local shelter until their owners can be found.
- Instead of lighting a firecracker, light your home with lamps, candles or other decorative ornaments that are friendly to the environment and to animals.

desensitized men are clearly defined in the Bible."

She cites Proverbs 12:10 which says: "A good man takes care of his animals, but wicked men are cruel to theirs."

Pray for animals

For her part, Nita Hontiveros Lachauco, president of PAWS, has this to say: "The secret to real and lasting peace is staring us in the face ... Simply let the animals into our lives. It is what the natural law dictates—humans and animals are co-beneficiaries of this world."

How do humans let animals into their inner sanctum?

"One great way is to pray for them daily," Lachauco says.

Another is "to officially include them in church prayers, not only in October (when

World Animal Day is celebrated) but also during New Year's Eve ceremonies. Then watch and see true and lasting peace expand in homes, in our lives, in our country, in the world," she says.

Consunji adds: "Preaching about love and forgiveness for one's neighbor without teaching respect for all creatures is hypocritical."

Gluttonous proportions

"Ironically, there is no other season which exploits animals more than on the very month that Jesus was born. We continue the feast as we usher in the New Year, to gluttonous proportions," says Regodon. "Wouldn't it be better if food on the table wasn't a result of cruelty and abuse?"

Peta explains that animals raised for

food are subjected to violent, painful procedures such as de-horning, de-beaking, and castration, all of which are done without anesthesia.

"In order to maximize profits, factory farmers confine animals to spaces so small they can barely turn around," Regodon says. "Many never see the light of day or feel soil or grass beneath their feet. When they have reached the end of their brief growth cycles (artificially accelerated by drugs), they are trucked away to their deaths."

Free vegetarian kit

"Our intention is to raise awareness on behalf of God's creatures and to make the world a more merciful place. We want to put a stop to animal abuse and foster compassion toward all crea-

tures by encouraging the adoption of a vegetarian diet. This is entirely in keeping with the most cherished ideas of people of faith," Regodon says.

Peta is encouraging those who want to give up meat to visit www.PETAAsaPacific.com for a free vegetarian starter kit which is loaded with information, tips and recipes.

"Please consider exploring veganism, the only diet that is compassionate and respectful of all God's creation. To find out more, visit www.jesusveg.com," adds Regodon.

Solving world hunger

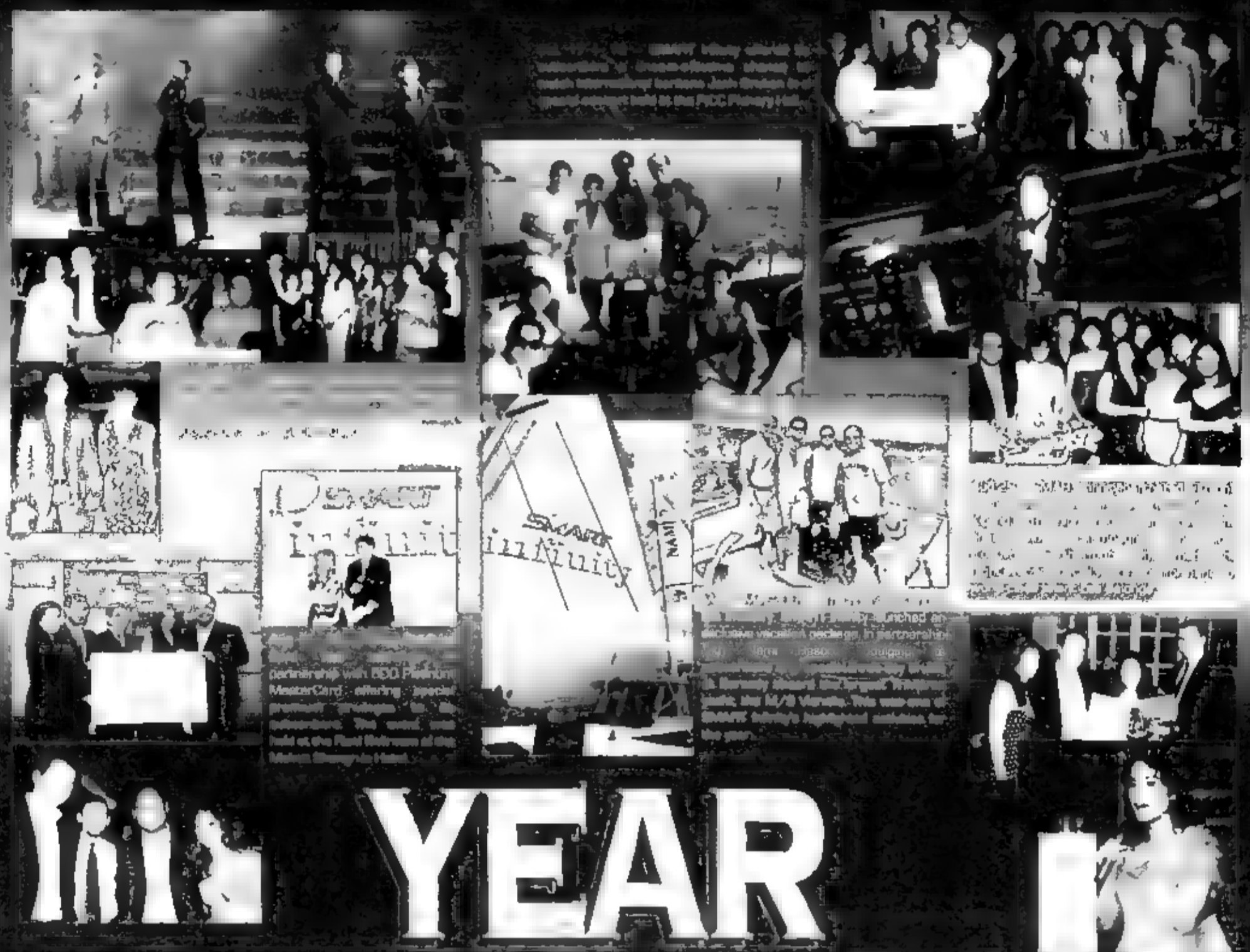
In his book "Diet for a Small Planet," Frances Moore Lappe wrote that the feed cost of an eight-ounce steak is equivalent to a full cup of cooked cereal grains for 45 to 50 people. The 4.8 pounds of grain fed to cattle to produce one pound of beef for human beings represents a colossal waste of resources in a world still teeming with people who suffer from profound hunger and malnutrition.

According to the British group Vegfam (a famine relief charity organization which believes in vegetarianism), a 10-acre farm can support 60 people growing soybeans, 24 people growing wheat, 10 people growing corn but only two producing cattle.

According to Food Revolution author John Robbins, "under even the best of circumstances ... a meat-based diet is incredibly wasteful of the resources and inputs that make food production possible. If we are serious about creating a thriving, just and sustainable way of life for all, it is imperative that we shift to a plant-based diet."

Physician and author Dean Ornish M.D., who developed the Ornish Diet, specifically formulated to reverse heart disease, recommends a vegetarian diet together with exercise, meditation, an emotional support group and no smoking.

A SPECTACULAR

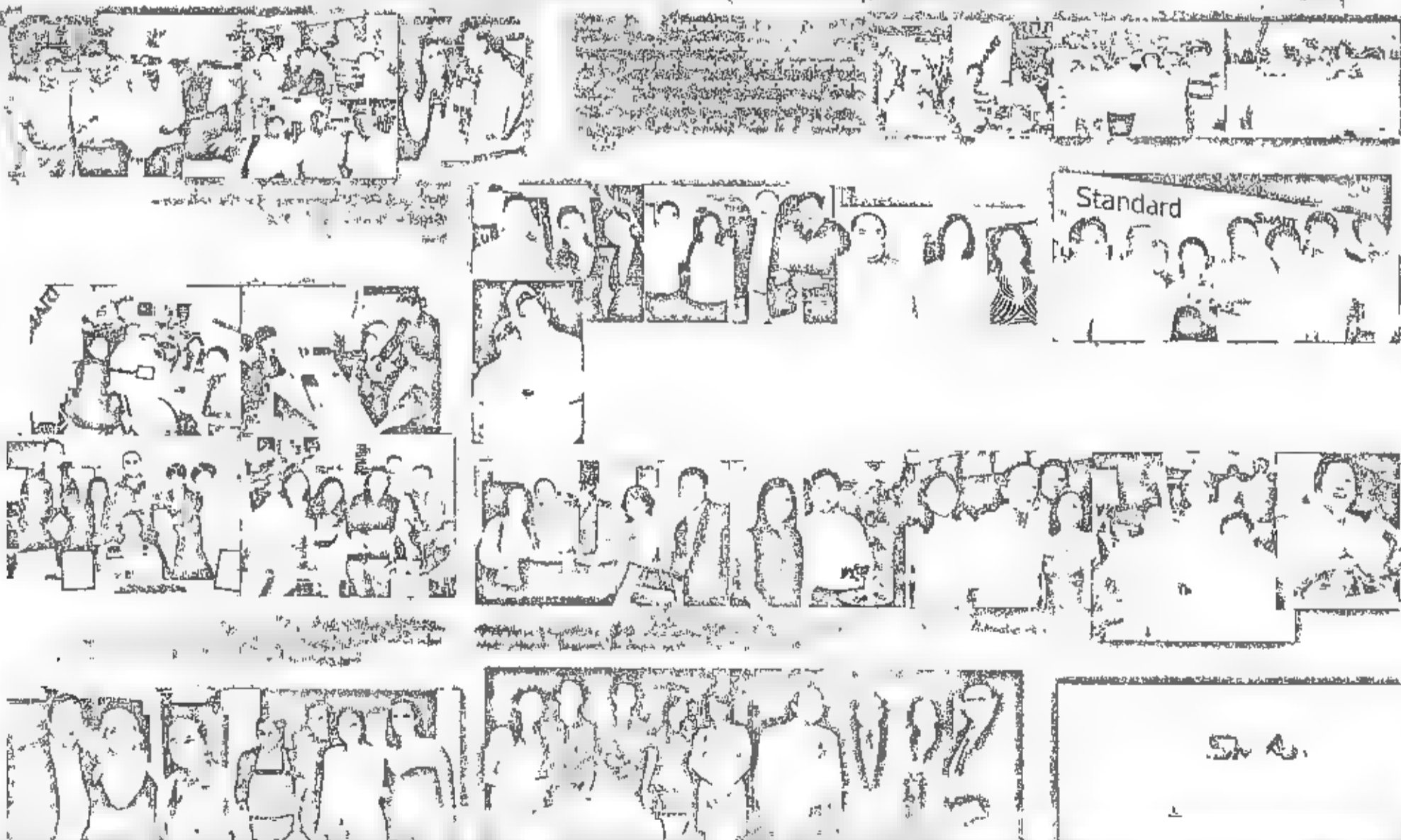


SMART Infinity, the premiere post-paid service of Smart Communications, Inc. (SMART), truly shone this year with a host of exclusive treats and events for its privileged subscribers. "We are proud to report that SMART Infinity was able to live up to its thrust of giving only the best to its customers," said SMART Infinity head, Julie Carceller. Here are the highlights of the past year:



FOR SMART INFINITY

A collage of black and white photographs depicting various scenes of student life. The images include group portraits of students, individuals in athletic gear, and social gatherings. The word "YEAR" is printed in large, bold, serif capital letters across the bottom center of the collage.

[illegible]

Small Business

night involved a special presentation (reducing Minny's privileges) and was capped with a special retrospective.

FOR SMART INFINITY

RETAKE OF PRECEDING FRAME

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MMDA looking for a few good men

4,000 posts vacant as 3,510 workers opt for early retirement

By DJ Yap

GOOD TIDINGS FOR UNEMPLOYED FILIPINOS IN THE COMING year: Thousands of job vacancies have just opened up at the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority.

Up to 4,000 positions are up for grabs at the MMDA as the agency seeks to fill up vacancies left by employees who opted for early retirement, MMDA Chair Bayan Fernando said yesterday.

Some 500 of the vacant posts are for traffic enforcers who will supplement the agency's 2,000-strong traffic workforce, not including deputized enforcers employed by local governments, he added.

The MMDA is also looking for college graduates with degrees in mechanical engineering or architecture. Other positions available are operators of cranes and other heavy equipment, mechanics, welders, drivers, gardeners and carpenters.

According to Fernando, the prospective new hires are expected to perform tasks in line with the MMDA's programs, including its ambitious "Metro Gwapo" beautification project, among others.

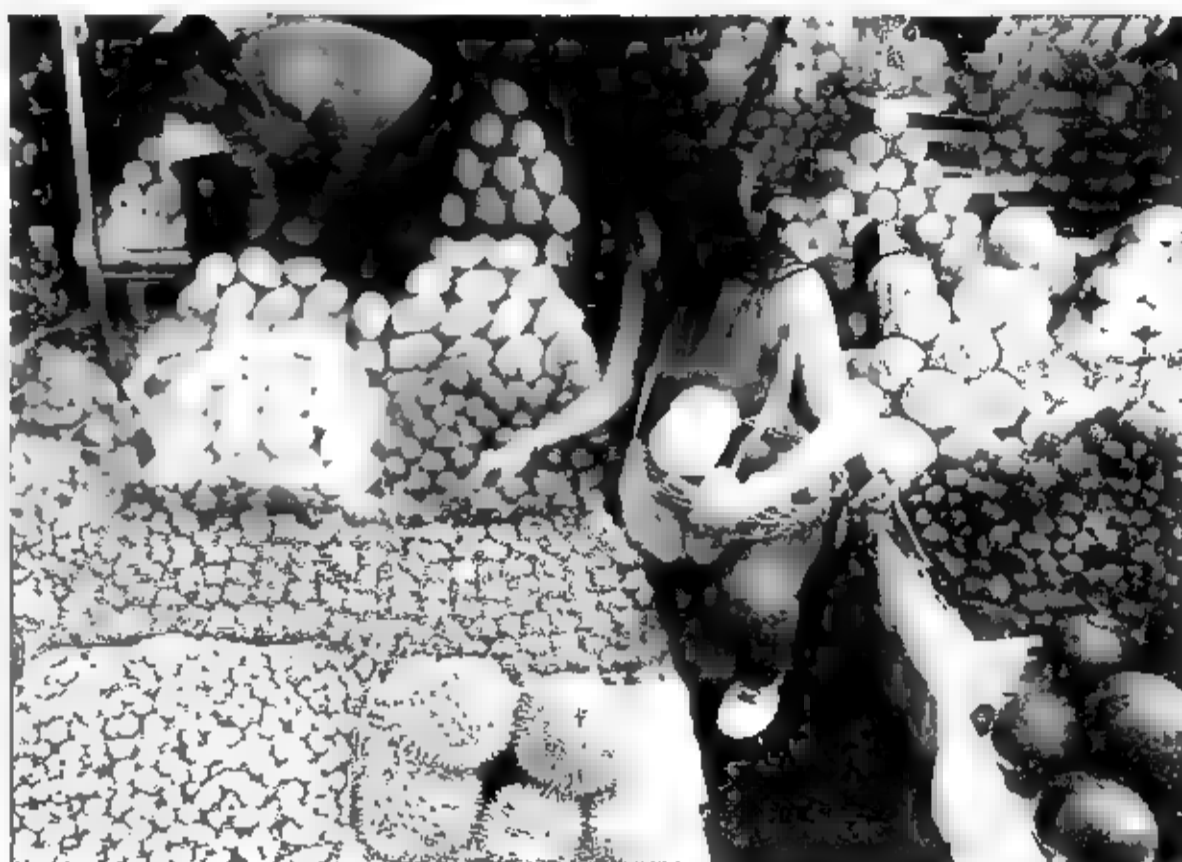
Those interested in the traffic enforcer position should have two years of college education and a height of at least 5'4" for women and 5'6" for men, the MMDA chair said.

Fernando urged job seekers to apply for the positions as soon as possible to ensure sufficient manpower for the agency.

This year, 3,510 MMDA employees filed for early retirement, drastically reducing the 9,000-strong workforce. Their jobs ranged from office clerks to street sweepers and traffic aides.

Of those who opted to retire early, almost 2,000 have been issued "stop working" notices since Oct. 31. The rest have been allowed to extend their term till today, the last day of the year.

The early retirement option was offered to MMDA employees in line with the government's rationalization program.



LUCKY FRUITS

A woman at a market in Malate, Manila, fills her basket with round and not-so-round fruits for New Year's Eve. MANILA

Car thieves strike in QC, make off with van, SUV

By Jeannette L. Andrade

CAR THIEVES STRUCK TWICE YESTERDAY in Quezon City, taking a van and a sport utility vehicle and leaving one of their victims injured.

Ronald Bantog was brought to the East Avenue Medical Center for a deep cut in the right eyebrow after the thieves made off with his white Toyota Grandia van with special license plate RVF 08.

Based on reports from the Quezon City Police District, Bantog was parked in front of a supermarket on Congressional Avenue in Project 8 at around 2 a.m. yesterday when three armed men wearing bonnets alighted from a white Honda Civic and approached him.

The police said the suspects hit Bantog in

the head with the butt of a high-powered firearm and took over the wheel of his van. They brought along Bantog, left him on Road 1 near the corner of Visayas Avenue in Project 6 and then drove away.

Police on board a patrol car chanced upon the victim and brought him to the hospital.

Almost seven hours later, three men on board a red motorcycle stole a white Toyota Rav-4 (2JV 336) which was parked at the corner of Retiro Street and D. Tuazon Avenue in Sta. Mesa Heights.

The vehicle was recovered two hours later at the corner of Cordillera and Sgt. O. M. Alcaraz Streets in La Loma.

Witnesses said the men on board the vehicle abandoned it and escaped on a motorcycle which they had commandeered.

Experts offer tips on keeping pets calm on New Year's Eve

By Mariel D. Salazar
Contributor

AMID THE EXCITEMENT AND FESTIVITIES on New Year's Eve, many people often forget that not everyone enjoys the use of firecrackers to greet the coming year, especially animals.

Dr. Nick Carpio of the Vets in Practice Clinic in Mandaue City has advised pet owners to take the necessary steps to keep their furry companions calm and safe during the merrymaking.

"It would be best if the animals are placed in a room as far away as possible from the streets to at least minimize the loud noise" created by firecrackers, he said.

There are also medication that owners can give their pets hours before the festivities start to keep them calm, he added.

For example, there's Calmivet which makes dogs a little drowsy. There's also the herbal-based Pet Relaxant.

But Carpio advised people to consult a veterinarian before dispensing any medicine to animals "because they might give the dosage intended for humans which could be dangerous."

For those who prefer the natural approach, the veterinarian has this suggestion: "Massage lavender oil on your pet's head and light a lavender candle or incense which gives a soothing effect."

The lights in the house can also be

dimmed to create a calming atmosphere. With a lighted candle or incense in the room, however, people should constantly check on their pets or stay with them just to make sure that no fires break out, Carpio said.

Joey Tiosayco, president of Lovepets.com, an animal welfare group, also offered several tips.

Cats, for example, can be placed in cages because when they are frightened, they get disoriented and might flee from the house, he said.

Dog owners, on the other hand, should observe their animals for signs of trauma which include incessant barking, restlessness (pacing back and forth) and shaking.

"To each his own," Tiosayco said, "there's no single formula in dealing with this situation." He added that animals living in high-rise condominiums are luckier because the noise level is lower.

People living closer to the street, however, can play some music to mask some of the sounds coming from outside their house.

He recommended that dogs in cages outside the house be placed away from the area where firecrackers are being lit "because they have sensitive noses" and the air they breathe in could be harmful to them.

According to Carpio, cases of poisoning caused by gunpowder are common after the revelry. When dogs go out on the streets, they might step on gunpowder which they could ingest when they lick their paws.



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The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

Who killed Bhutto? We may never know

ISLAMABAD—AS WITH OTHER ASSASSINATIONS in Pakistan's bloody political history, the world may never know who killed Benazir Bhutto—but there is no shortage of potential culprits to choose from, analysts say.

There could be almost as many motives as well, in a country with a murky nexus of intelligence agencies, dozens of Islamic militant outfits, hundreds of tribal clans and an army whose reach extends to every corner of Pakistani life.

While the government was quick to point a finger at al-Qaida, that name is little more than a convenient catch-all for a staggering array of militant groups, and the reality is vastly more complex, analysts say.

The government's ties with Islamic militants, whether training them to fight in Kashmir or jockey for power in Afghanistan, leave the state apparatus itself with questions to answer, they say.

"It is common knowledge that some of the intelligence agencies have maintained links with militant and sectarian groups, dating back to the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan," said political analyst Hasan Askari.

"Even after Pakistan joined the global war on terrorism, there was always doubt whether these agencies fully severed their connections to militant elements," said Askari, former head of political science at Punjab University.

The leaders of Pakistan's three intelligence agencies are all current or retired members of the military, which has run the country for more than half its existence—and has its own checkered history with the Bhutto family.

After Bhutto survived the worst terror attack in Pakistan's history in October, she blamed remnants of the regime of Gen. Zia ul-Haq, who toppled her fa-

ther from power in 1977 and had him hanged two years later. President Pervez Musharraf was head of the military when he seized power in a 1999 coup and remained army chief until just over a month ago, giving up a lifelong career in uniform only after intense pressure to bring Pakistan nominally under civilian rule.

His decision to become a US ally after Sept. 11 enraged Islamic hardliners, who have everything to gain from fostering turmoil, which dissipates the state's ability to rein them in.

"Their aim is to have a safe haven in Pakistan from where they can carry out an agenda of radical Islam," said a top government counterterrorism official who could not be named.

"Their action plan is to eliminate leaders and strike at targets which could deeply hurt state institutions," the official said. "Their long-term plan is to destabilize Pakistan, as that would give them space to move around."

Adding to the mix of home-grown militants, Pakistan's northern tribal areas became a safe haven for the hardcore Arab leadership of al-Qaida, including Osama bin Laden, after they escaped from Afghanistan in November 2001.

From this unruly mountainous region al-Qaida has plotted a global terrorist war that has included two attempts to kill Musharraf and the 7/7 London underground bombings.

If the jumble of disparate militant groups may once have had different goals, they were united by a hatred of Bhutto, whose enormous popular appeal and pro-US stance were a major obstacle to their objectives.

Analysts say her elimina-



tion—capping a year of unprecedented militant violence that has left more than 800 people dead—can only be seen to undermine Musharraf's assertions that he has brought radicals under control.

"Ultimately, governments have to accept responsibility for the circumstances under which such

acts take place," said Rasool Baksh Rais of the Lahore University of Management Sciences.

"Although the government would not appear to benefit from Bhutto's assassination, it cannot absolve itself of responsibility," Rais said. "The Musharraf government has many questions to answer." AFP

SUPPORTERS of Pakistan's former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto mourning at the grave of their leader in Garhi Khuda Balhash near Larkana, Pakistan, Dec. 30.

TV shows photos of '2 attackers'

ISLAMABAD—A PAKISTANI TELEVISION channel broadcast on Sunday grainy still pictures of what it said appeared to be two men who attacked and killed opposition leader Benazir Bhutto.

Former Prime Minister Bhutto was killed in a gun and bomb attack on Thursday as she stood up through the sun-roof of her bullet-proof vehicle to wave to supporters as she left an election rally in the city of Rawalpindi.

The government has blamed al-Qaida. Dawn News Television showed three pictures it said it had obtained from an amateur photographer.

One showed two men standing in the crowd outside the rally ground before Bhutto left.

One was a clean-cut young man wearing sun glasses, a white shirt and dark waist coat. Behind him stood a man with a white shawl over his head, who Dawn said was believed to be the bomber.

Two other photographs showed the clean-cut man pointing a pistol at Bhutto as she left the rally.

He appeared to be about 3 meters from Bhutto, standing on the left of her vehicle, pointing the gun with his right hand as she faced away from him.

Authorities said three shots were fired at Bhutto moments before a suicide bomber set off explosives. As well as Bhutto, 23 people were killed.

Authorities have not said how many attackers they believed were involved.

Senior police and government officials declined immediate comment saying a four-officer team was handling the investigation.

The government said Bhutto was killed when the force of the blast smashed her head into a lever on the sun-roof, which fractured her skull.

Her party dismisses that as "ridiculous" saying she was killed by a bullet in the head.

Doctors did not carry out a post-mortem of Bhutto's body on the instructions of her family, officials say.

The Interior Ministry said on Saturday her body could be exhumed for more tests if her party wanted. Reuters

France prepares to stub out smoking in cafés

PARIS—FRENCH SMOKERS have just a few more hours to indulge their habit in public before the country joins several of its neighbors on Wednesday in imposing a complete tobacco ban in bars, restaurants and nightclubs.

What was long regarded as a citizen's inalienable right comes to a definitive end just after the start of the New Year, and though some fear the demise of France's cherished café culture, few predict any serious opposition.

"The decree has been ready for more than a year. Everyone knows it is going to be applied. No one can say they've been duped," said Health Minister Roselyne Bachelot.

The outright ban follows February's prohibition of smoking in offices, schools, hospitals, stations, airports and trains, and places the country alongside Ireland, Britain, Italy and Spain in the European vanguard against public smoking.

The 11-month time-lag for "places of entertainment and conviviality" was to af-

low owners to install—if they wished—specially insulated and ventilated smokers' rooms, an expensive option that very few have taken up.

Technically the ban means that as the clock chimes midnight New Year's revellers will be told to stub out their cigarettes and cigars or risk a fine, but in practice the government has said there will be no attempt to enforce it on Jan. 2.

Some cafés and restaurants have already converted to no smoking, with some claiming it has brought in more customers, and the government points to the experience in Italy where it says there was a 20-percent increase in turnover when bars and restaurants banned tobacco.

But opposition has come from groups representing tobaccoists and café-owners, who fear smoking customers will prefer to socialize at home. They are asking for special dispensations in rural areas where the village "café-tabac" is part of the social fabric. AFP

Bin Laden says US seeks to exploit Iraqi oil

DUBAI—AL-QAIDA LEADER Osama bin Laden accused Washington of plotting to take control of Iraq's oil and urged Iraqis to reject efforts to rebuild a US-backed national unity government there.

The militant leader also vowed in a recording posted on an Islamist website on Saturday to expand jihad to liberate all Palestinian land "from the (Mediterranean) sea to the (Jordan) river" and said his group will never recognize Israel.

"America seeks, alongside its agents in the region, to create an allied government ... that would accept in advance the

presence of major US bases in Iraq and give the Americans all they wish of Iraq's oil," he said in the 56-minute recording.

The Saudi-born militant said the envisaged Iraqi government was also meant to help Washington "fully dominate" the region with help from allies such as Saudi Arabia.

"The government of Riyadh is still playing its wicked roles," he said, describing Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah as the United States' "chief agent."

Referring to a Saudi push in February to help Palestinian rivals agree a unity government which fell apart in June, he said Riyadh

was part of a scheme to lure Islamist Palestinian militant group Hamas away from its jihadist roots.

"I assure our kin in Palestine especially that we shall expand our jihad ... We will not recognize a state for the Jews over even an inch of Palestinian soil," said Bin Laden.

Bin Laden did not mention accusations al-Qaida was behind Thursday's assassination of Pakistani opposition leader Benazir Bhutto. A Qaeda-allied militant leader has denied involvement.

Bin Laden took a swing at Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of Iran-backed Lebanese Hezbollah group, for accepting the expansion of a United Nations force in

Lebanon after the Shiite group's war with the Jewish state in 2006.

The peacekeepers sent to Lebanon after the war were there to "protect the Jews," said Bin Laden, whose group belongs to a school of Islam that sees Shiite Muslims as heretics.

Bin Laden said Washington was planning to form a new Iraqi national unity government and warned that those who took part would be turning their backs on Islam.

Sunni Arabs pulled out of Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's Shiite-led government earlier this year, accusing it of being too sectarian. Reuters

Concerns grow over delayed Colombia hostage deal

VILLAVICENCIO, COLOMBIA—A Venezuelan-sponsored plan to free three hostages held by Colombian rebels was stalled by the guerrillas' failure to reveal their location, and Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez said it may unravel if the stalemate drags on.

Concern was growing on Sunday about the mission to release two former Colombian politicians and the young son born to one of them in captivity as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, withheld their whereabouts after weeks of promising to free them.



GONZALEZ

Chavez negotiated the rescue effort with the FARC and had initially hoped to see the release take place on Thursday.

"If this were to drag on three or four or five days, for security reasons, it could collapse and we would have to think of something else," he said late on Saturday.

The leftist firebrand was not the only one voicing concern.

"The question is why is it taking so long for the FARC to give the coordinates. They were the ones who proposed this hostage release," a senior Colombian government official told Reuters,

asking not to be identified.

Others involved in planning the handover said there was still time for the FARC to say where it was keeping Consuelo Gonzalez, Clara Rojas and her son Emmanuel, who was fathered by a guerrilla fighter and is thought to be 4 years old.

"We do not have the coordinates but we could get them at any time, and then we expect the mission to move along," said Yves Heller, spokesperson for the International Committee of the Red Cross, which is helping coordinate the hand-over. Reuters

Surprise, surprise: New York has become one of US' safest cities

NEW YORK—ASTONISHINGLY, the nation's largest city is among the safest.

Homicides in New York are expected to fall below 500 this year, fewer than in any year since reliable record-keeping began 44 years ago. Mayor Michael Bloomberg and his police commissioner, Ray Kelly, could easily pat each other on the back and call it a day. Laud-

ably, they have instead pledged to bring crime under control in neighborhoods that have so far eluded success.

The mayor and Kelly plan to send all 914 officers from the new class of graduated recruits to join other officers assigned to these tough areas. This will essentially double the Operation Impact force, which matches new recruits with seasoned officers and is

credited with helping to reduce crime in nearly all categories, including rapes and robberies.

New technologies have paid off, as have innovative strategies, such as periodically checking homes where there have been reports of domestic violence. Homicides in that category alone dropped by one-third.

The overall statistics are all the more amazing because the

department has been operating with limited resources. Even as the city continues to grow in population, with record numbers of visitors, the police force, at 35,400 officers, remains well below its authorized strength of nearly 38,000.

And recruiting has suffered in part because New York offers the worst starting annual salary in any major city, \$25,100. Nearly

300 recruits in the graduating class did not make it, many because of the financial strain.

The hot spots where new officers will be dispatched are predominantly minority neighborhoods in central Brooklyn, the Bronx, and parts of Manhattan and Queens. The police must take special care to protect the civil rights of residents, most of whom are law abiding. Kelly's

choice of venue for his announcement—Harlem's 28th Precinct—suggested that he intends to take that issue seriously.

The commissioner noted that the number of murders had dropped to three in a precinct that once recorded more than 100 deaths every year. That's the kind of success every corner of New York deserves. New York Times



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FOR whipping up an incredible fightback and making history, these hardy Batang Pier of Harbour Centre toast the very best of their four tide wins on center court like no one else can. RAVILIM

Harbour five nails record fourth crown

Batang Pier rally from 19 pts down

By Jasmine W. Payo

HARBOUR CENTRE PULLED OFF AN UNBELIEVABLE TURN-around yesterday and became the first team in PBL history to capture four straight championships.

After spoiling Hapee's perfect record run the other day, the Batang Pier went all the way with a dramatic overtime 94-88 win over the Complete Protectors in Game 3 of the V-Go Extreme Energy Drink Cup at the Riza Coliseum.

"What can I say, the boys just never gave up," said coach Jorge Galent. "They really tried their best to win. We were down, but the players didn't want to give up. It's just the heart of the champions."

Harbour rallied from a 16-point deficit in the last nine minutes of regulation, forged the extension at 78-61 with 4.8 seconds left on a split free throw by TY Tang then took the lead for the first time—and for good—early in the extension behind the player who blew Game 1 away with two missed free throws.

"This is Harbour Centre basketball, we never say die, we're never out of it," said FI-Am Solomon Mercado, who won the Pivotal Player plian after unloading 14 of his 20 points in the last eight minutes of action.

"We just wanted to go out there and attack, be aggressive and see what will happen, and it happened," added Mercado, whose free throw muffs allowed Hapee to take Game 1, 72-69, Thursday and extend their unbeaten run to 12.

Harbour ended Hapee's perfect run with a 73-59 rout the other night to pave the way for the winner-take-all match, which proved too much of a thriller that Harbour Centre owner Mikee Romero was rushed later to the hospital due to heart palpitations.

Batang Pier actually trailed by as many as 19 points, 36-55, early in the third quarter before outscoring the Complete Protectors, 42-23, for the rest of the regulation period to forge overtime.



MOST VALUABLE: TY Tang

AUGUST DELA CRUZ

"We just kept coming back," said Tang, who was honored as the Finals Most Valuable Player.

Mercado opened the extension by completing a three-point play that gave Batang Pier their first taste of the lead at 81-78, then later combined with Tang to give Harbour a 90-84 advantage with only 49.6 seconds left.

Mercado finished with 20 points while Tang added 13 like

Rico Maierhofer and Jerwin Gaco.

"After our Game 1 loss, we were still confident," said Galent. "Just like what happened in the semifinals (versus San Mig Coffee), we came back. We took it a game at a time."

FI-Am Gabe Norwood, who was sensation-a in the Complete Protectors' explosive run earlier in the tournament, proved the goat this time.

With Hapee protecting a slim 78-77 lead, Norwood bungled two foul shots that could have given the Complete Protectors more breathing room in the last 7.6 seconds of the fourth quarter.

Seconds later, Tang came up with the equalizing free throw that gave Harbour a new lease on life.

The Complete Protectors, who registered a blistering 66-percent shooting clip in the first half, seemed to have the crown in their grasp as Mark Borboran, who shot a game-high 21 points, Larry Rodriguez, Reed Juntilla and Norwood flashed superb forms.

The scores:

HARBOUR CENTRE 84—Mercado 20, Tang 13, Maierhofer 13, Gaco 13, Abatou 9, Vergara 5, Gonzales 5, Taylor 4, Gariboa 4, Asoro 4, Melabanan 4, Fernandez 0.

HAPEE 87—Borboran 21, Rodriguez 17, Juntilla 16, Norwood 12, Das 7, Mercado 5, Espiritu 4, Sagundel 3, Hamida 2, Grilado 1, Quinday 0, Hugutan 0.

Quarters: 12-21, 34-47, 50-68, 78-78 (reg), 94-88 (OT)

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TO BE CONTINUED



Inquirer Sports' top choices for 2007

10

of the best

Boxers, golfers shine; SEA Games bets flop

By Francis T. Ochoa

IF IT WERE UP TO MANNY PACQUIAO'S FANS, THE definitive moment of Philippine sports in the year 2007 should have been captured this way in a photograph: The Filipino ring sensation, sweat dripping down a finely chiseled body that had earlier struggled to make the weight, standing over a fallen Marco Antonio Barrera, yet another Mexican Hall-of-Famer who had hoped to conquer the Pacman.

Instead, it ended up with Pacquiao and Barrera caught in a snapshot sealing a brand-new friendship, moments after the Mexican somehow managed—albeit with the help of a little foul punch toward the end of their fight—to stay on his feet for 12 rounds against the jackhammer-like punches of the Filipino. It seemed that in the midst of the knockout hopes and the flurry of pugilistic exchanges, only Freddie Roach saw what made Pacquiao's conquest of Barrera special.

"Manny boxed well and showed good footwork, which was what we worked at," said the American trainer. "Manny cut him off and moved him to the right, which was a beautiful thing."

The people manning the Inquirer Sports desk saw the same thing and voted Pacquiao's story—and that of the country's newly minted world champions—as the year's sporting highlight.

Here, in niggles, are the rest of the best—and the worst—of Filipino exploits in the sporting arena in 2007. The Sports desk ranked the 10 best stories according to their impact on local sports.

1. Donaire, 3 others world's best

Very few had heard of Nonito Donaire until the morning of July 8, when his story landed on the front pages of newspapers. The report, coming out of Bridgeport, Connecticut, stated that the Filipino-American had just given the Philippines a world title.

Donaire knocked out the undefeated Vic Darchinyan in the fifth round of a scheduled 12-rounder, claiming his Armenian-Australian victim's International



MINOZA: Seniors' tour next

Boxing Federation (IBF) flyweight title. On that same day, another unheralded fighter made it two world crowns for the country: Florante Condes showed tremendous fighting heart in flooring champion Muhammad Rachman twice en route to snatching the IBF mini-flyweight (105-lb) crown via a split decision, right in his opponent's hometown of Jakarta.

That kicked off what's to be a banner year for pro boxing in the country. Gerry Peñalosa became the third Filipino world champion in two months, on Aug. 12, dethroning Mexican World Boxing Organization (WBO) bantamweight champion Johnny Gonzalez with a seventh-round knockout at the Arco Arena in Sacramento, California, during the Philippines vs Mexico boxing dual meet, dubbed as the World Cup.

The 35-year-old former WBC super flyweight champion put away the Mexican for good with one punch to the body late in the seventh round.

And then late in the year, Donnie Nietes capped the RP world title spree by forging a unanimous decision triumph over previously undefeated Pomsawan Kratingdaengym of Thailand to capture the WBO minimumweight crown at the Waterfront Cebu Hotel on Oct. 1.

For sheer hype—and cash purse—none of those bouts came even close to marching the enormity of the Pacquiao-Barrera match held in Las Vegas on Oct. 7. Or even Pacquiao's fight against Mexican Jorge Solis on Apr. 15 in San Antonio, Texas. Heck, they even failed to grab the same kind of spotlight as the battle Pacquiao waged—and lost—against the wispy Darlene Custodio for a seat in Congress.

But those fights have the one thing Pacquiao's battles, those inside the ring, sorely lacked, at least for the moment: a world title.

Pacquiao is scheduled to slug it out with reigning WBC super featherweight king Juan Manuel Marquez—the last of the Mexican greats standing in the way of his dictatorial rule in the super featherweight ranks.

2. Bittersweet basketball

After years of putting up with a dysfunctional Basketball Association of the Philippines (BAP), sports officials and other major stakeholders of the sport decided to unite and take drastic action.

After years of mudslinging, band-aid solutions and politicizing, basketball finally found a new federation to rest its hopes on: The Samahang Basketbol ng Pilipinas (SBP).

After a Unity Congress that patched up the cracks in a fractured basketball landscape, the international basketball federation (Fiba) informed SBP president Manny V. Pangilinan that the federation was finally lifting its ban on Philippine participation in international tournaments. It was a ban that lasted two years and denied the country a gold medal, but in the 2005 Manila Southeast Asian Games basketball competition.



NONITO Donaire falls to his knees as he celebrates his fifth-round knockout victory over Vic Darchinyan of Australia during the IBF flyweight championship in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Donaire's feat kicked off a world title romp for the country, which ended the year with four world champions.



AFTER dominating the Seaba tilt, Darny Seigle and the RP squad fail to book an Olympic berth at the Fiba Asia men's championship.

But the light of the inspiring breakthrough failed to put in the shadow the one ugly, glaring reality in basketball in the country: While Unity Congresses make for good photo-ops and program hatchings, they don't put the country any closer to its cherished dream: An Olympic participation again.

"We have to be patient," Pangilinan said then. "The problems of basketball isn't going to be fixed overnight. It's going to take a really determined effort to improve Philippine basketball."

After a successful Seaba stint that flaunted the country's hoop might—sadly, only in the Southeast Asian region—the country's best shot at the Olympics came up via the Fiba Asia qualifier in Tokushima, Japan.

There, the Olympic dreams of a nation lay crushed under the wealth of Asian talent.

With China seeded into the Olympics by virtue of its hosting the 2008 edition, Philippine hopes soared as an extra slot was made available for Asia. All the country needed to do was win the qualifier.

Unfortunately, even after an inspiring victory over a second-rate Chinese squad, the Philippines fell short, kicked

out of the race during the elimination round by a pair of losses to rising Middle Eastern powers including Iran, which went on to win the Asian title and the Beijing ticket that went along with it.

With China seeded into the Olympics by virtue of its hosting the 2008 edition, Philippine hopes soared as an extra slot was made available for Asia. All the country needed to do was win the qualifier

out of the race during the elimination round by a pair of losses to rising Middle Eastern powers including Iran, which went on to win the Asian title and the Beijing ticket that went along with it.

3. Sinking to the depths of SEA

Miguel Molina will always be remembered as the one face that saved the country's participation in the 24th Southeast Asian Games, which will go down as the edition of the biennial meet where a defending champion surrendered its crown faster than its athletes could get to the finish line.

After claiming 113 gold medals in 2005, the year the Philippines hosted the small-time meet among members of the Southeast Asian community, the country tumbled to its worst finish ever, collecting just 41 gold medals to finish in sixth place.

"We prepared hard, but the rest prepared harder," POC president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco and PSC chair William "Bunch" Ramirez both said.

Molina was half of the main story of that SEA Games. And his was a story to be proud of: Trained in the United States, Molina won four gold medals as the country proved its might in swimming competitions.

The other half of the story? The box-

ing team. Depending on where you're looking from, the national boxing squad, hyped as the country's best chance to end an Olympic gold-medal drought, was either a turncoat who treated the Games as a freebie supplied by taxpayers' money or a patriot who let it be known that Filipinos were not going to take an assault on its pride sitting down.

Threatening to boycott the Games in the northern Thai province of Nakhon Ratchasima after its women fighters got whine-washed by Thai counter-parts—save for Annie Albama's knockout triumph—the RP boxing team instead decided to show up for the men's finals. However, the male fighters, plucked from the "B" ranks of the national pool, either walked off their match or surrendered midway.

While officials and other parties were quick to defend the move as a stand against cheating, a lot also indicted the RP boxing team on charges of farcically disgracing the Philippine participation in the SEA Games.

In between Molina's heroics and boxing's debacle were stories of triumph and defeat. For every Jaime Asok who drug-rehabbed his way out of a night-

mare and into a gold medal, there was a bowling squad that compered in a trail of controversy and paid dearly for it. For every Cecil Mamit who fought tenaciously to fell a well-funded foe and win the tennis singles gold, there was an athletics squad that fell way short of expect-

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5. He isn't so-so, this Wesley

If the grandmaster title is chess' version of immortality, then Wesley So has already achieved an ageless status.

On Dec. 7, after a relatively unspectacular draw with Iranian GM Ehsan Ghaem Maghami in the final round of the Prospero Pichay International Open chess tournament, So finally completed his GM requirements.

He thus became the country's newest grandmaster, one of two players to achieve that feat this year: Darwin Laylo, suspended earlier in the year for alleged game-fixing, also joined the ranks of chess masters of the highest order.

But what made So's feat spectacular is the fact that he was the seventh youngest chess player to achieve the status, completing his GM requirements at 14 years, one month and 28 days old. Likewise, he is currently the world's youngest GM.

He joins Eugene Torre, who became Asia's first GM in 1974, the late Rosendo Balinas (1976), Rogelio "Joey" Antonio Jr. (1998), Buenaventura "Bong" Villamayor (2000), Nelson Mariano (2004), Mark Paragua (2005) and Darwin Laylo (2007) on the elite list of Filipino GMs.

The 27-year-old Laylo clinched his GM title by landing seventh in the Asian Individual Chess Championship held at the Cebu International Convention Center in Mandaue City in September.

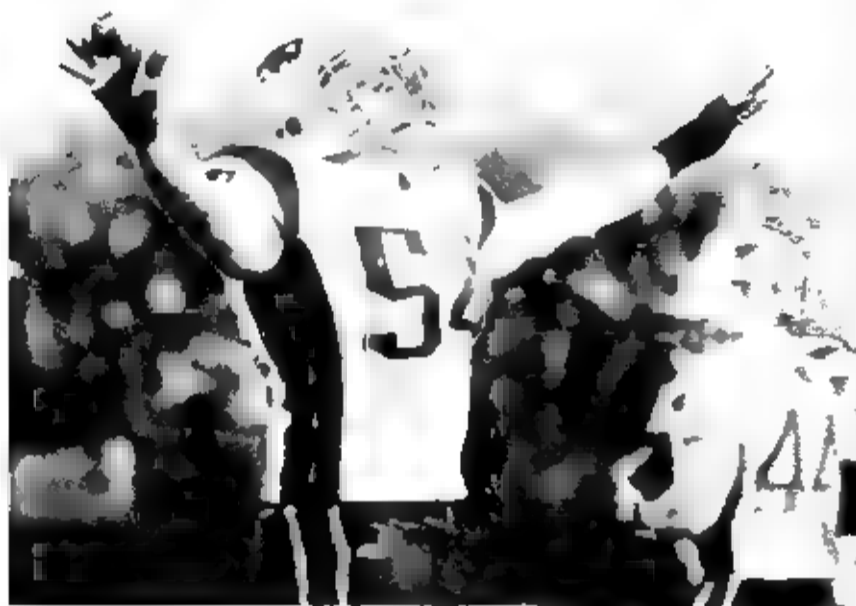
"This is a memorable year for local chess," said Pichay, who is president of the National Chess Federation of the Philippines. "We produced not only one but two GMs in a span of three months."

To be continued tomorrow

Simply perfect, these Patriots

New England nips New York Giants, sets four records

EAST RUTHERFORD, NEW JERSEY—IN A FITTING FINISH to Boston's magical year in sports, the New England Patriots—Bill Belichick's History Boys—last night recovered from a 12-point, second-half deficit and defeated the New York Giants, 38-35, to complete the first 16-0 regular season in the history of the National Football League.



TEDY Bruschi of the New England Patriots celebrates at the end of the game.



IN COMMAND: Tom Brady (No. 12), in a role that will most likely earn him MVP honors, gives out instructions on the way to quarterbacking the New England Patriots to history.

Tom Brady set the record for touchdown passes in a season (50), Randy Moss set the record for touchdown catches (23), and the Patriots set the season scoring record (589 points). New England needs another Super Bowl trophy to make its case as the best team in football history.

"To be able to win 'em all is great," conceded the ever-stoic Belichick. "I'm happy about it. It's really exciting to be part of this."

Few games are likely to match the drama that unfolded before 79,110 witnesses at the Meadowlands. Meaningless in the standings, a game with no bearing on the playoffs, the Patriots and Giants played four quarters of bone-crushing, foot-to-the-floor football.

The big play came with 11:06 left, when Brady connected with a wide-open Moss on a 65-yard touchdown pass. The perfect parabola put the Patriots ahead for good, while simultaneously booting Peyton Manning and Jerry Rice from the record book. Significant records. Just like 16-0.

"I had to throw it as far as I could," said Brady. "It doesn't get any better than that. Everyone's got to enjoy this."

It was more than must-see TV. The game was a breakthrough television

event on par with the Kennedy-Nixon debates and the first moonwalk. The game was broadcast on three national networks (first NFL simulcast since Super Bowl I in 1967) and aired on three Boston channels, plus the much-maligned NFL Network.

Now it's already an ESPN Classic and bound for the History Channel.

The Giants had been colored as cardboard cutouts, mere props in the coronation of the perfect Patriots. But Tom Coughlin's guys wanted to be giant killers. They wanted to slay the bulies who vaporized the rest of the NFL in 2007.

Not quite. Not with Brady (32 of 42 passing for 356 yards) on the attack. The Patriots quarterback capped what is certain to be an MVP season with the latest in a long line of comeback victories.

"What I'm most proud of is that we beat a playoff team on the road," said Brady.

There was a playoff atmosphere in and around Giants Stadium early in the evening. Many fans wearing Brady and Tedy Bruschi jerseys were spotted drinking beverages and huddling around open fires in the perimeter parking lots.

The Giants took the opening kickoff and marched 74 yards in seven plays to

take a 7-0 lead in the fifth minute of play.

The Patriots answered with a 37-yard Stephen Gostkowski field goal, then took a 10-7 lead when Brady connected with Moss on a 4-yard TD pass at the start of the second. The TD officially made the 2007 Patriots the highest scoring team in NFL history (previously held by the 1998 Vikings).

The Patriots regained the lead on a pair of field goals (45 and 37 yards) by Gostkowski, but Eli Manning led the Giants on an eight play, 85 yard touchdown drive before intermission. Manning's three-yard TD strike to Kevin Boss gave the Giants a 21-16 lead at the half.

But Brady simply wouldn't let his team lose. Superman took the Patriots down the field on a 73-yard drive, capped by Laurence Maroney's 6-yard run to cut the margin to 28-23.

After the New England defense finally took a stand, Brady got the ball back and connected with Moss again. Twice, actually.

Seconds after Moss dropped a game-tying touchdown pass, Brady went back to his favorite target and found Moss wide open a second time. The result was the touchdown pass that shattered all the records and put the Patriots in the lead for good. *New York Times News Service*

Sharapova tunes up in Asian tilts

SINGAPORE—RUSSIAN STAR MARIA Sharapova plans to use low key matches in Singapore and Hong Kong to fine-tune her game before launching her Australian Open assault.

Sharapova said her Asian strategy was an attempt to go one better at next month's Australian Open, where she lost in the final in 2007 to American Serena Williams.

The world No. 5 plays an exhibition match later Sunday in Singapore against compatriot Anna Chakvetadze and then heads to Hong Kong for the star-studded JB Group Classic.

Six of the world's top 11 women players will face off in the Hong Kong tournament including sixth-ranked Chakvetadze, world No. 6 Venus Williams and No. 4 Ana Ivanovic.

"I am going to take every single match seriously because it is like I said, my only preparation for the Australian Open," Sharapova said.

The former US and Wimbledon champion has beaten Chakvetadze in all six previous encounters, but Sharapova is not taking anything for granted. Chakvetadze broke into the top 10 rankings for the first time this year.

Celtics defense makes Jazz play off-key

SALT LAKE CITY—AS PAUL PIERCE walked off the hardwood court, he chanted over and over again, "Road warriors, road warriors!"

The Celtics advanced to 3-0 on their four-game West Coast trip with a 104-98 victory over the Jazz at a sold-out EnergySolutions Arena Saturday night. Boston improved to an NBA-best 25-3 record, winning its seventh straight road game and fifth straight overall. The loss was only the third at home this season in 13 games for Utah (16-16).

"This is a big win for us, man," Pierce said. "A lot of things didn't go our way. That's a tough team to guard. They shot the ball well. They're tough at home. The crowd was really into it. But some way, some how we found ways to get the win, man. It shows a lot about this team and we're learning more and more about ourselves every day."

Pierce scored all of his game-high 24 points, including two 3-pointers and 10 free throws, in the second half. Ray Allen scored 23 points and nailed five

3-pointers. Kevin Garnett added 15 points and nine rebounds, and the bench added 24 points. After giving up 56 points in the first half, the Celtics' top-ranked defense limited Utah to 42 points in the second.

"Any time you win, especially when it's a collective group, it's big," Garnett said.

While the Celtics rested in Utah Friday night, the struggling Jazz were hammered, 123-109, on the road to the Los Angeles Lakers. Andrei Kirilenko was out for last night's game with an injury. Jazz newcomer Kyle Korver, acquired in a trade from the Sixers Saturday, wasn't in town yet.

Even so, EnergySolutions Arena is one of the toughest places in the league for visiting teams.

"This is one of the hardest places to play," Garnett said. "This building has always been electrifying. I've always found it a pleasure playing here."

Utah entered the game fourth in the NBA in scoring with an average of 104.8 points per game. Boston entered with the NBA's top defense, allowing

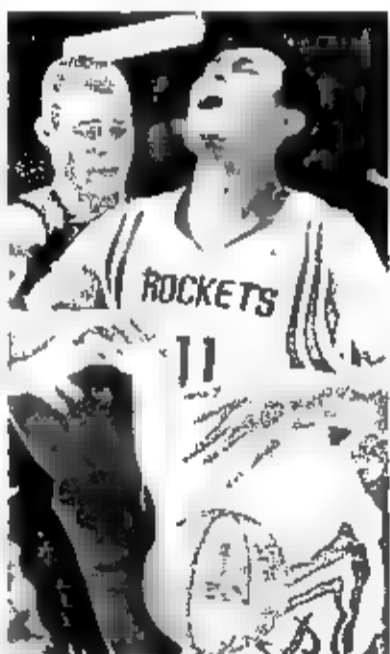
86.3 points per game. The Jazz outscored the Celtics, 56-49, in the first half on 64.9-percent shooting.

"(The coaching staff) got on all of them defensively," coach Doc Rivers said. "They were shooting 65 percent at halftime. It's almost a bad thing when you score early like we were in the first five or six possessions and we got into a trade-a-basket mentality. That's not how we've played all year."

In Dallas, Dirk Nowitzki had 22 points, Josh Howard and Devin Harris each had 19, and the Dallas Mavericks led throughout in a 97-84 victory Saturday that snapped Atlanta's five-game winning streak.

Dallas made its first five shots, including 3-pointers by Howard and Nowitzki, to jump out to a 12-0 lead less than 2½ minutes into the game.

In other games, it was Pistons 98, Pacers 92; Wizards 96, Heat 74; Hornets 86, Cavaliers 76; Magic 104, Bobcats 95; Rockets 91, Raptors 79; Nets 97, Bucks 95; and SuperSonics 109, Timberwolves 90. *New York Times News Service, AP*



HOUSTON Rockets center Yao Ming (right) gets hammered by the Toronto Raptors' Kris Humphries. The Rockets beat the Raptors, 91-79.



SEASON OF GIVING: Toby's Sports and the Greenhills Rotary Club donate sports equipment and gift packs to kids housed at the Bahay Bagong Rehab Center for street children on drugs at Camp Bagong Diwa, Bicutan, Taguig. Joining the ceremonial donation were (from left) Toby Claudio (operations manager), Jojo Claudio (president), and Bobby Claudio (CEO and chair of the Toby's Group of Companies).

Real Spicy takes on all comers at Sta. Ana

LOCAL CHAMPION REAL SPICY WILL TAKE on imported thoroughbreds at the Grand Championship of the Santa Ana Park Stakes Series today at the Santa Ana Park.

Real Spicy, fresh from a victory over Native Land last week in the P1-million Philracom Yearend Invitational under the stewardship of jockey Jeffry Zarate, and new import sensation Drama Belle (Australia) will lead the race that promises to be a classic showdown of the top contenders in the open handicap set.

Drama Belle topped the P4-million Eduardo Gojuaque Jr. Cup last November and bagged P2.4 million.

Set over a distance of 1,800-meters, two of

the five previous leg winners of the 2007 Santa Ana Park Stakes will also bid for the championship crown and the P500,000 prize—first leg winner Irene's Fantasy (US) and fifth leg conqueror Copper Dew (US).

Completing the cast are Wild Orchid (Australia) and Fairy Queen (Australia).

Real Spicy's win in the Yearend Invitational race, which covered over 1,600-meters, was the 5-year-old's first after failing in six stakes races.

The son of Real Quiet and Spicy Take ended the winning run of Native Land, who won the Martho Breeders Cup Classic and the Gold Cup recently.

To regain the attention that had shifted lately to rising three-year-olds like Es Twenty Six, Ibarra and juvenile stable mate Indefinite Ink, Real Spicy must produce a performance worthy of the Horse of the Year award he won in 2006, observers say.

Four-year-old filly Drama Belle, meanwhile, will have to prove that her victory last month in the ECJ Cup was no fluke as she returns to action with retiring jockey Armando Lumagui on the saddle. A win for Drama Belle would already secure her the best import tag.

Emerging as the most credible threat for the premier spot is three-year-old US-bred filly Copper Dew.



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IN THIS ISSUE

- Local bourse rewrites five stock records /B2
- BCDA eyes development of 'second Global City' /B5

BUSINESS

Editor Raul O. Marcano • Assistant Editor Corrie S. Narisma

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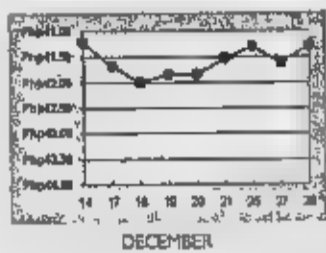
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P300-M budget surplus possible this year

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As of 5 p.m., Dec. 28, 2007

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per ounce Hong Kong, Dec. 28, 2007

STOCK MARKET

Cautious trading seen

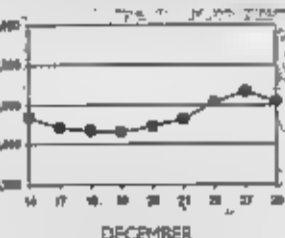
INVESTORS ARE SEEN TRACKING news from abroad when the market opens the new year with a shortened trading week, traders said.

Financial markets will be closed today and tomorrow for the New Year holidays.

"I think the market will remain hostaged by developments overseas. We saw profit-taking last week after four days of gains and the long weekend ahead. But there may be some positioning for 2008 on companies with good performances," said Astro del Castillo, managing director of First Grade Holdings Inc.

CAUTIOUS/B2

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



DECEMBER

(See stock market report on Page B2)

Worst-case scenario is a deficit of only ₱15.1B

By Michelle Y. Remo

THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT IS POISED TO incur a budget deficit of only ₱15.1 billion this year under a worst-case scenario, or a surplus of ₱300 million under the best-case forecast of the Department of Finance.

Even under the worst-case forecast, the deficit would still be much lower than the ₱63-billion ceiling allowed under the 2007 fiscal program. Under the "medium-case" scenario, the government would record a deficit of ₱9.1 billion.

The figures are the government's official estimates and

were presented by Finance Secretary Margarito Teves during a meeting of the board of the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) last Friday.

The Neda Board includes officials from the Neda and the departments of Finance and Budget and Management. It is

chaired by President Macapagal-Arroyo.

"The three scenarios indicate that the target for the year would definitely be surpassed," an official from the DBM told reporters.

The government's better-than-target fiscal performance this year was largely due to income generated from the sale of state-owned assets. The government raised about ₱90 billion this year by selling its stakes in PNO Energy Development Corp., Philippine Telecommunications Investments Corp. and Philippine National Bank as well as the old

Iloilo airport property.

Should the government meet the best-case forecast of a ₱300-million surplus, then it would overperform even its 2008 target of a balanced budget. Under the medium-term program of the government, it was supposed to reduce its deficit to ₱63 billion this year before totally wiping it out by 2008.

Privatization revenues more than offset the shortfalls in tax and duty collections of the Bureau of Internal Revenue and the Bureau of Customs.

From January to November, the BIR collected ₱647.7 billion.

P300-M BUDGET/B2

BSP expects net loss of ₱41B this year

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG Pilipinas expects to end the year with a net loss of ₱41 billion, a turnaround from the ₱3.79 billion in net profit last year, due to heavy foreign exchange losses arising from the dollar's weak-

ening against the peso.

A recent BSP report showed that for the full year, the central bank is expecting about ₱67 billion in losses from foreign exchange fluctuations, a reversal of the ₱3.8 billion in foreign exchange gains in 2006.

But the BSP expects to trim its full-year net loss from the ₱45.6-billion deficit recorded from January to October partly due to a decline in interest expense on its overnight borrowings and special deposit facility following three consecutive months of interest rate

cuts, monetary officials explained.

Since October this year, the central bank has slashed its key policy rates by 75 basis points, bringing down the benchmark overnight borrowing rate to a record low of 5.25 percent.

BSP/B3

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Heed lessons of 1997 crisis, ADB urges East Asia

By Doris C. Dumlaog

BOOMING STOCK MARKETS and property prices are making consumers in East Asia feel wealthier, but government economic managers should watch out for excesses that could lead to spiraling inflation, the Asian Development Bank said.

In a special feature "Asset Markets and the Real Economy" published in its December Asia economic monitor, the ADB urged East Asia to keep in mind the lessons from the currency turmoil of 1997 that wreaked havoc on Thailand, Indonesia, South Korea, Malaysia and the Philippines

"... A sustained period of asset price inflation often undermines financial sector soundness, even if those gains appear broadly justified by fundamentals," the ADB said. "With surging asset prices and increasingly sizable asset markets, the main challenge for macroeconomic policy in emerging East Asia is to prevent any financial market excess from spilling over to goods and services markets, thus threatening macroeconomic stability."

In the case of the Philippines, the ADB noted that stock market capitalization surged to about 125 percent of gross domestic product at pre-

sent from only 59 percent in 2001.

A similar boom is seen elsewhere in East Asia, defined as the region which Southeast Asia (of which the Philippines is part of), the People's Republic of China and the four newly industrialized economies of Hong Kong, Korea, Singapore and Taiwan.

The ADB urged East Asian governments to remain focused on containing inflationary pressures and expectations, and strengthening financial market regulation and supervision to address risks associated with asset price booms.

"Prudential measures, such

as tightening lending standards and criteria, could limit the speculative participation that may lead to misalignment of asset prices and the consequent price collapse," the ADB said.

The ADB said tightening supervisory policies could also be helpful, "as they can target problem sectors more closely, while limiting the risk of derailing economic growth by using monetary policy that can have long-lasting and much broader macroeconomic consequences."

Since 2001, stock prices has doubled and property values soared in East Asia, raising some concerns about surging asset prices and the potential

impact on economic activity of a major correction in these markets. Property prices are rising fast as well.

Higher asset prices increase the wealth of consumers, boosting consumer confidence and encouraging higher spending. Stronger asset values would also improve firms' and banks' balance sheets and thus induce banks to charge lower premiums or increase the size of loans. At the same time, booming stock markets encourage corporate investment by lowering the cost of funding.

"Empirical research shows that the wealth effect of asset

prices, though small, is significant in emerging East Asia," the ADB said.

A 10-percent rise in real stock prices was estimated to increase private consumption by about 0.2-0.3 percent, similar in magnitude to estimates for industrialized countries.

"The 1997 Asian financial crisis was a vivid example that soaring asset prices, pushed by large capital inflows, increased the leverage of borrowers and expanded investment through the financial accelerator channel, contributing to financial and economic volatility," the ADB said.

New Year's debt

THERE IS A COMMON *pamahiin* (folk belief) that one should pay off one's debts before the start of a new year, or face a whole year of being in debt.

I must admit I used to go by this rule myself and made a special effort to settle my debts before year's end—until I started using credit cards and realized that there was no way I could stay out of debt anyway, no matter how big or small.

How is our debt situation as we leave 2007 behind and enter the new year 2008? We can look at this on two levels: The national level, and the personal level. The available data tell us that the debt situation appears to be easing at the national level; on the personal level, though, things appear to be getting worse.

The crisis then

First, the good news. We have come a long way since that time a couple of years ago when UP economists called attention to the fiscal crisis that was before us.

That was a time when the total amount spent by the government to service our public debt, combining both interest payments and amortization of principal, was literally equivalent to P9 of every P10 of revenue collected by the government.

The numbers, which I wrote about in this space then, were P301.7 billion for interest payments and P344 billion for principal amortization, summing up

to P646 billion total debt service payments.

That's 88.5 percent, or roughly 9 out of 10, of the P730 billion in revenues collected then. That was, indeed, a crisis situation by anyone's standard.

Not very many people realized how bad it really was then, as the more commonly cited figure is the share of the government budget going to interest payments, which was just about one-third or 34 percent then.

But this ignored the principal part of the debt payments, while using the bigger denominator of government budget, which is revenues plus the P120 billion budget deficit then.

Even so, this ratio was bad enough as it was, implying that for every three pesos spent by the government, only two went to "productive" spending.

Improved ratios

Fast forward to the present, and we see a totally different, and much improved, picture.

For 2007, the projected combined debt service-to-revenue ratio is just 55 percent, and for the proposed 2008 budget, down further to 50 percent. That's down to one out of two, from 9 out of 10. (It had first gone down to 82 percent, or roughly four out of five, in 2006.)

Even the share of the proposed 2008 budget going to payments will go down to 20 percent or just

No FREE LUNCH
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one-fifth, from the earlier one-third.

Why this positive reversal of fortunes? Credit it to both the expanded VAT and the appreciating peso. The additional P80 billion or so that the higher VAT brought in helped break us out of the vicious circle of debt we were caught in two years ago.

But it also helped a great deal that the peso value of our foreign debt payments had substantially gone down due to the steep drop in the peso-dollar exchange rate, which was at P56 in mid-2005 and now down to the P41 level.

Both factors have meant a sacrifice for us, and unfortunately, both entailed a relatively greater sacrifice for lower-income Filipinos than richer ones.

That is, the higher VAT hit the poor more than the rich in relative terms. Similarly, the lower exchange rate has impacted more heavily on lower-income Filipinos, especially workers in firms producing tradable goods and OFW families subsisting on foreign remittances.

Personal debt

This leads me to the bad

news, this time on the side of personal debt.

While the public debt situation seems to be improving, Bangko Sentral data suggest that Filipinos are both heavier in debt, and less able to pay for it. Data released last week show that credit card receivables rose by 22.6 percent over last year to P106 billion, much faster than the 7.1-percent growth in overall incomes (as measured by GDP).

Along with this steep rise in indebtedness came a rise in overdue credit card receivables, which went up 7.7 percent over the past quarter—almost twice as fast as the overall growth in credit card debt (3.9 percent).

The same picture emerges from BSP data on car loans. These grew by 22.2 percent from last year, which is good news for the car industry.

The bad news, though, is that overdue car loans went up more than twice as fast (10.8 percent) as the growth in overall car loans (5.3 percent) over the past quarter. That is, car loan borrowers are increasingly unable to pay up.

Puzzling disconnect

The overall picture that emerges, then, is that while the debt burden is easing for the government and the country as a whole, the opposite is true for individual Filipino borrowers.

This is yet another one of the puzzling "disconnects" be-

tween the seemingly good economic news on the macro level, and the not-so-good news at the level of the common Filipino.

But not nearly as puzzling, I guess, as the other New Year *pamahiin* that says you'll have a year of bad luck if the first person you meet in the new

year is female, but good luck if it is a male you first encounter (ever heard that one before?).

A happy, prosperous and debt-free (unlikely as it may seem) New Year to one and all!

(Comments are welcome at chabito@ateneo.edu.)

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Music and games, N81 8GB plays both

Text and photos by Charles E. Ruban

IT SEEMS ONLY YESTERDAY when Nokia launched the N-Series, the Finnish company's high-end smart phones that offer loads of advanced entertainment options and other productivity tools.

The N81 8GB is one of the most recent addition to this family (that also include the N95, N93, and N77).

It resembles the N95 although it features a more straightforward, one-way slider mechanism with music player controls arranged around the central navigation key-pad rather than under a separate cover.



UNLIKE the N95, the N81 8GB features a more straightforward, one-way slide mechanism.

As its name suggests, this device comes with 8 gigabytes of internal flash memory.

This feature alone makes the N81 8GB special among the N-Series, making it comparable to a lot of dedicated portable music and media players. Although it has no memory card expansion, users will just have to be watchful of they store in the device.

But wait, this is not where this phone excels in. Talk about

gaming and this phone is tops in this area.

Revive the N-Gage

The N81 8GB sort of revives the N-Gage platform (remember Nokia's N-Gage classic and QD models several years ago?), as it comes pre-loaded with three N-Gage gaming applications—Space Impact, Asphalt 3D, and FIFA '07.

Most notable of these is the mobile version of FIFA '07 soccer developed by the world's leading interactive entertainment software company, Electronic Arts.

The way it performs, expect more users to request Nokia to come up with similarly cool and exciting mobile games—as well as a joystick—in the near future.

Viewing screen

Well these games would be worthless if the N81 8GB doesn't have a decent viewing

Luckily, the N81 8GB is

blessed with a relatively large 2.4-inch screen (16.7 million colors and 240 x 320 pixels) that can be tilted horizontally so one could play games or watch video clips more comfortably.

Indeed, as a multimedia player, the N81 8GB provides a predictably excellent experience.

Audio could be heard either through the external speakers on both sides of the N81 8GB or, more preferably, through headphones plugged into the 3.5 mm headphone jack.

Music controls in front

Controls for the media player are located on the front of the phone, and it's possible to start playing music without even entering the menu.

But here's a caveat—these same controls could accidentally fire up the music while sending text messages as this writer found out.

Transferring tracks to the phone should now be easy since, apart from the 3G fea-

ture, one could also use the mobile phone's Wi-Fi to go to the Nokia "Ovi" web services platform, which offers an all new music download store at faster than 3G speeds and without incurring expensive mobile data charges.

Indeed, with its built-in Wi-Fi networking and massive internal storage, this writer strongly recommends the Nokia N81.

Yes, it doesn't come with the same wealth of functionality as the N95—no GPS and a lower quality camera—but with ample track storage capacity, it could be your low-cost alternative to the N95.



RP To Become More "Techie" In 5 Years

By Riza T. Olchondra

IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS, innovations will enable Filipinos to manage their life through phones, travel safely in cars with "reflexes," have "green" appliances, know the source and make-up of the food we eat, and consult with doctors who have "super senses" because of medical gadgets.

IBM said in its "Next Five In Five" report on innovations that this will be a global trend.

Former National Economic Development Authority director general Dr. Cayetano Paderanga, who now heads the Institute for Development and Economic Analysis (IDEA) Inc., said the Philippines can play that game and is in fact leading in some of these trends.

5 Trends in 5 Years

• Your mobile phone will be your wallet, ticket buyer, bank, shopping buddy, and electronic ID.

• Applications in new vehicles will have sensors for avoiding collisions, choosing alternate routes, and making automatic adjustments to traffic lights.

• "Green" appliances could alert you via SMS if you left it open when you left home, provide updates on electrical usage, and generally help you be more environmentally friendly.

environmentally friendly.

• Sensor-fitted food labels will let you know where your box of ready to cook rice meal came from, what are the substances in it, and the type of conditions it underwent during shipping.

• Doctors will have special gadgets to see through to your organs and hear the faintest variation in your heartbeat. They will also be able to diagnose and explore treatment options using a 3D model of your body called an avatar.

RP potential

Paderanga said that such innovations as forecast by IBM will likely be led by Asian countries such as Korea and Japan, and not by western countries such as the US. He noted that the Philippines is already a global player in mobile innovation with mobile remittances, banking, and other services.

The next potential is in medical technology that could boost the medical tourism and offshoring businesses, he said.

"If we just continue what we have been doing for the past few years, we can innovate even the areas that we are currently not strong in, such as smart cars and eco-friendly appliances. That is, encourage competition, let the private sector invest freely, let them and the government continue to invest in infrastructure, and grow the economy at five percent or more every year," he said.

Projecting images the Acer way

TIRED OF THE USUAL, sometimes even boring, multimedia presentations?

The most logical solution to that would be to replace it.

But a simple replacement may not be enough. What you have to replace it with must be a product of quality.

Then again, it's not just quality that should count. The product has to come from a reliable company—one that offers true value for money.

Consider Acer's DLP projectors, like the X1160, P1165E, both with Native SVGA 800 x 600 resolution, and the P5260E with Native XGA 1024 x 768 resolution. All these are packed with some of the most innovative and practical features found in multimedia projectors in the market today.

Among its impressive features are the Acer ColorBoost technology, with optimized 6-segment color-wheel design and advanced lamp illumination technology for incredible color performance, the Acer SmartFormat technology that supports comprehensive "wide-format" signals, and the Empowering Key for easy access to features like eProjection Management, eView Management, eTimer and eOpening Management.

Other interesting stuff include Digital Connectivity-HD MI port for the P5260E that deliv-

ers uncompressed digital signals and provides easy connectivity to high-definition broadcasts, Digital Connectivity-DVI port for the P11653 and P5260E that supports digital high-definition signal and secure connectivity to various media sources, plus Instant Pack (no more waiting for the unit to cool down before unplugging), Auto Shutdown (for automatic safety shutdown when there's no signal) and Quick Start (15-second startup after pressing the power button).

But what really makes these products stand out is their lightweight structure—all Acer projector models weigh less than 3 kilograms.

If you're really on the lookout for the next freshly featured, power-packed, lightweight, color-rich, multimedia projector to own, why not try Acer projectors? They're fun to look at yet impressive enough to please your boss during office presentations, and perhaps help you

bag that next interesting client. Or you may just sit back, relax, have a popcorn and watch a blockbuster movie together with your family or that special someone by your side? Nothing gets sweeter—and better—than that.

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Acer ranks as the world's No. 4 branded PC vendor, designing easy, dependable IT solutions that empower people to reach their goals and enhance their lives. Since spinning-off its manufacturing operation, Acer has focused on globally marketing its brand-name products: mobile and desktop PCs, servers and storage, LCD monitors and high-definition TVs, and handheld/navigational devices. Acer's unique Channel Business Model is instrumental to the company's continued success. The model encourages partners and suppliers to collaborate in a winning formula of supply-chain management, allowing Acer to provide customers

with fresh technologies, competitive pricing, and quality service. Established in 1976, Acer Inc. employs 5,300 people supporting dealers and distributors in more than 100 countries. Estimated revenue for 2006 is US\$11.31 billion. Please visit www.acer.com.



Top security concerns in '07; trends to watch out for in '08

THE COMPLEXITY AND EVER-changing threat landscape and the emergence of newer and more complex viruses—malware and hacking techniques developed by the criminal underworld—topped the concerns of businesses in 2007.

In addition, the proliferation of mobile computing and emergence of new computing devices—such as smart phones, thumb drives, and other peripheral devices—has increased the vulnerable access points of corporate networks for malicious activities.

2007 Internet security trends

High-profile data breaches which underscore the importance of data loss prevention technologies and strategies was one of the key trends observed by Symantec in 2007.

High profile victims of data breaches include financial industries, career recruitment, and retail.

Another Internet security trend observed for this year was the debut of Windows Vista. Attackers quickly found security holes in the operating system.

To date, Microsoft has released 16

security patches that impacted on the new operating system.

As expected, spam continued to be a major concern in 2007, with image spam declining and PDF spam seen emerging as a new source of annoyance. A new attack called Greeting-card spam was also seen responsible for delivering the Storm Worm malware (also known as Peacomm).

Professional Attack Kits, particularly the MPack and phishing tool kits made a big splash in 2007.

Attackers are becoming increasingly sophisticated and organized, and have begun to adopt methods that are similar to traditional software development and business practices. Of the phishing web sites observed in the first half of the year, 42 percent were associated with phishing toolkits.

Phishing too, continued to be big in 2007, with an 8 percent increase in unique phishing sites during the first half of the year.

Symantec listed phishing toolkits as a major contributor to the growing problem of Internet security attacks in 2007.

Another menacing trend seen this

year were attackers who now prefer to just lie and wait for victims to come to them by exploiting trusted Web sites.

Attackers no longer actively seek out their intended victims, they are now compromising trusted sites. When a user visits a trusted site, the attacker may have their way with the victim's computer.

Joining the 2007 top 10 Internet trend list are bots and botnets, which continued to silently slip into unsecured computers and perpetrate a wide variety of malicious activity.

Bots knocked Estonia off the online map. The Storm Worm malware employed bot technology as well.

Web plug-in vulnerabilities and exploits continued to plague IT staff members during 2007. ActiveX controls that comprised majority of plug-in vulnerabilities, posed various security threats that may compromise the availability, confidentiality, and integrity of a vulnerable computer.

Another trend observed in 2007 was Vulnerabilities for Sale—a system's vulnerabilities would be sold to the highest bidder.

Finally, Virtual Machine Security Im-

plications made headlines in 2007 with major players going public even though the security implications of virtual technology have not yet been fully understood.

Security trends to watch in 2008

Symantec warns that the year 2008 will bring about threats that include dissemination of misinformation, fraud, phishing, and invasion of privacy.

Bots will continue to diversify and evolve in their behavior in 2008. Consumers can also expect to see things like phishing sites hosted by bot zombies, among other forms of attack.

Symantec also expects that the number of new advanced web threats will rise as web services grow and browsers continue to converge on a uniform interpretation standard for scripting languages, such as JavaScript.

As the interest in mobile security is rising, attackers are also likely to take advantage of mobile platforms as phones become more complex, more interesting and more connected.

Symantec also expects to see spam evolving in order to evade traditional blocking systems and trick users into

reading messages.

Consumers can expect to see new types of attachments that contain malicious codes. Spammers will also continue to focus on making content more appealing to readers, capitalizing on highly visible current events.

Game enthusiasts are also at greater risk in 2008 as criminals, phishers, spammers, and others turn their attention to Virtual Worlds, while massive multiplayer online games (MMOGs) expand.

Global leader

Symantec is a global leader in infrastructure software, enabling businesses and consumers to have confidence in a connected world.

The company helps customers protect their infrastructure, information, and interactions by delivering software and services that address risks to security, availability, compliance and performance.

Based in Cupertino, California, Symantec has operations in more than 40 countries.

More information is available at www.symantec.com.

BCDA eyes development of 'second Global City'

Land ownership dispute seen as a stumbling block

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE BASES CONVERSION DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (BCDA) said it was preparing to establish a "second Bonifacio Global City" as it awaited a court decision on the ownership of a 25.8-hectare property that would form part of the development.

BCDA vice president Aileen Zosa said in an interview that the planned development would border the southern side of Forbes Park and Dasmarinas Village.

The project will, however, be less than half the original Global City, which covers an area of more than 200 hectares.

"The new Global City would cover about 94.4 hectares, in-

cluding the 35.5-ha Jusmag area and the 33.1-ha Ascom/BNS/Marines headquarters area," Zosa said.

"These two pieces of property are ready for disposal but the BCDA is keen on waiting for the resolution of the ownership dispute between the agency and Noval (or Navy Officer Village Association Inc.) over the 25.8-ha property," she added.

Such consideration made following a favorable decision of the Supreme Court in 2006, which recognized the BCDA's ownership of the Jusmag area that a group of Armed Forces and police officers—the Southside Homeowners Association Inc. or Shai—claimed was owned by its members.

Asked whether a lengthy waiting time for the Supreme Court decision on Noval could compromise the option to create the second Global City, Zosa said the BCDA was "not in a hurry" to dispose of the three pieces of property.

Still, the BCDA has not even taken possession of the Jusmag property and the agency has filed with the Pasig City Regional Trial Court an urgent manifestation and motion for the issuance of a writ of execution of the SC ruling.

"We hope to secure the Jusmag titles within 2008," Zosa said.

BCDA data show that the Jusmag/Shai property was valued at P50,000 a square meter and

could earn at least P1.5 billion in upfront cash.

As for the Noval and Ascom/BNS/Marines HQ, which are adjacent to each other, the land covered was valued at P60,000 per sq m.

Since starting the conversion into productive civilian use of former military land and facilities across Luzon in the 1990s, the BCDA has posted P38.2 billion in earnings as of October 2007.

Of the amount, 80 percent of P30.36 billion came from Bonifacio; 12 percent or P4.7 billion from leases and joint ventures; 5 percent or P1.9 billion from outright sale, and 3 percent or P1.24 billion from securitization.

Saudi Prince's \$153-M hotel project gets perks

THE BOARD OF INVESTMENTS has approved the grant of incentives to a \$153-million hotel complex project of Saudi Arabia's Prince Alwaleed, the world's 13th richest person according to Forbes.com.

According to BOI data, the project cost of about P7.65 billion—which excludes the cost of land—covers P1.75 billion in hotel operation and the construction of the hotel, amounting to \$226,562 per room.

KHI Manila Property Inc., a joint venture between Alwaleed's Kingdom Hotel Investments and Ayala Land Inc., will build the tourism facilities at the corner of Makati Avenue and Arnaiz Road.

On that 7,377-square-meter property will rise a 300-room Fairmont Hotel, 30-suite Raffles Hotel and 189 Raffles-branded serviced residences.

The luxury hotel complex is aimed at international tourists who need five-star accommodations as well as those staying for longer than two weeks and in need of serviced apartments.

The apartments would also cater to businessmen and executives who are on assignment in the country for a month to a year, and to balikbayan families and local tourists on holiday.

The BOI said the project was in line with the Medium Term Development Plan for Tourism and was qualified for fiscal and non-fiscal incentives under the Investments Priorities Plan.

"This project aims to break a new ground toward the introduction and broadening of (the serviced apartment approach) in the tourist accommodation business in the Philippines," the agency said.

The project is expected to create jobs for 1,728 people in the construction stage and 1,119 in commercial operation, which will start in January 2011.

The BOI's announcement came after Alwaleed's visit to the country in August with a team of 40 executives to formalize the joint venture with ALI and explore other possible investments here.

According to Forbes.com's 2007 list of the world's billionaires, the "self-made" Alwaleed—a nephew of King Abdullah—is worth \$20.3 billion.

Last August, ALI president Jaime I. Ayala said the project marked the start of Ayala Center's makeover into a world-class business destination considering that Fairmont and Raffles represent two of the world's biggest luxury hotel brands.

NFA sees stable supply, prices of rice

By Amy R. Remo

THE NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY ends the year assuring consumers of stable supply and prices of quality rice and better income for farmers despite its estimated loss of P4.5 billion.

"The NFA is mandated to stabilize the prices of basic commodities during emergencies and must ensure that rice will be available at all times and at affordable price under whatever circumstances," said NFA Administrator Jessup P. Navarro.

Navarro noted increases in this year's monthly rice distribution, showing consumers' preference for government rice.

"As of mid-December, NFA had distributed 35.5 million 50-kilo bags, about four million bags higher than our target of 31.5 million bags," Navarro said.

Priced at P18.25 a kilo, the NFA rice is distributed through 3,709 Bigasang ni Gloria sa Palengke stores, 7,918 Tindahan Natin rice outlets, 197 Tindahan ni Gloria rolling stores and 20,233 accredited rice retailers.

Navarro explained that the Tindahan Natin outlets were specifically established in depressed communities to sell NFA rice, along with other basic commodities, at affordable prices.

As of mid-December, cumulative rice sales at Tindahan Natin outlets had reached 3.8 million bags, worth some P3.1 billion.

Meanwhile, Navarro said the NFA had consistently been able

to ensure food security and stability of rice supplies and prices in areas affected by calamities.

For this year, the agency issued a total of 133,645 bags of rice to various relief agencies and local governments in regions affected by strong typhoons Chedeng, Dodong, Hannah, Kabayan, Lando and Mina.

On top of ensuring rice supply and prices, the NFA extends its support to the government's nutrition campaign by distributing iron-fortified rice to pre-school and Grade 1 students.

This year, the NFA delivered 2.5 million bags of rice to 9,730 public elementary schools nationwide, benefiting 2.63 million school children.

For its stakeholders, Navarro said the NFA was able to provide farmers with higher profits, following the national government's directive to increase support price from P10 to P11 a kilo for clean and dry palay.

The increase took effect in October this year.

Individual farmers who sold their produce to the agency got an additional P0.25 a kilo as incentive, while farmers' cooperatives were granted another P0.25 a kilo as Cooperative Development Incentive Fund.

On top of these incentives, the NFA is giving farmers and cooperatives an additional P0.50 for every kilo of palay sold to the agency, known as the La Niña incentive, starting last month until March next year.



FILIPINO rice farmers are assured by the NFA of better prices for their produce. The agency has increased its buying price to P11 per kilo from P10 for clean and dry palay. On top of this, farmers get extra incentive from the NFA amounting to P0.25 to P1 per kilo. The NFA, in line with its mandate to ensure the stability of rice supply and prices, buys palay from farmers during harvest seasons to build its inventory and taps into the buffer to sell rice to the public during lean months.

E. Visayas palay output posts record growth

TACLOBAN CITY—EASTERN Visayas recorded the highest growth rate of 14.1 percent in palay production among the country's regions this year, the Department of Agriculture said.

"We even outperformed ourselves. We were able to exceed our own target," said Leo Cafieda, DA regional executive director. The agency has set a growth rate of 7.5 percent.

According to the Bureau of Agricultural Statistics, palay production in the region during the dry season (November 2006 to April 2007) was 508,000 metric tons. During the wet season (May to October 2007), it reached 440,000 MT.

The total palay production was 14.1 percent higher than the 831,000 MT posted in 2006.

Arsenio Fortin, DA regional technical director for LGU (lo-

cal government unit) support, extension and infrastructure, attributed the rise in production to favorable weather and LGU support for the rice program.

Agriculture officials here are optimistic that palay production at yearend would even be higher than the BAS forecast.

Among the provinces in the region, Leyte accounted for the biggest share in production at 58 percent. Southern Leyte and Samar contributed 9 percent each; Biliran and Northern Samar, 8 percent each, and Eastern Samar, 5 percent.

Eastern Visayas is now 113-percent rice sufficient, said Rufino Ayaso III, regional coordinator of the Ginintuang Masaganang Ani rice program.

For next year, the target rice production in the region is one million MT, Ayaso said. Vicente S. Labra, Inquirer Visayas

Fuji Xerox expects 100% business growth in RP

By Riza T. Olchondra

FUJI XEROX PRINTERS, THE SECOND largest printer manufacturer in the Philippines, said it would more than double its 2006 sales by the time its 2007 fiscal year ends in March.

James Henderson, managing director of Fuji Xerox Printers for Asia-Pacific, said the company sold only 1,000 printers when it entered the Philippine market in 2004. Thus, he said grew to 1,600 units in 2005 and 4,000 units in 2006.

The target for 2007 is 10,000 units. Henderson also expressed optimism that the company's market share would increase by a few percentage points due to a wide range of products being introduced to the market.

"We used to focus just on the enterprise market, but now we are bringing high-end technology to the consumer market at competitive cost," Henderson said. "We are new in this segment and have much room to grow, so we are optimistic."

Fuji Xerox Printers currently has a 20-percent share of the printer market in the Philippines—a far second to HP's 60 percent.

Henderson said the company would slowly close the gap in market share by offering more choices that fit the needs of customers.

Last Christmas, Fuji Xerox Printers launched the DocuPrint C1110, a high quality color printer in a small package.

Marketing manager for Asia Pacific and China Vincent Sim said the printer was launched to meet the growing demand of households and small businesses for quality color printouts at an affordable price and easy-to-use package.

PNOC group projects P4-B profit in 2007

By Abigail L. Ho

THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL OIL CO. expects its consolidated net income to breach the P4-billion mark this year, with the bulk to come from its petroleum exploration arm.

PNOC president Antonio Cailao said in a briefing that the government firm's group profit had already reached more than P3 billion as of end-September, on revenues of close to P5.2 billion.

Contributing the bulk of the earnings during the first nine months was

PNOC Exploration Corp., registering gross revenues of P4.9 billion and a net income of almost P1.5 billion.

PNOC itself posted gross revenues of only P643 million, but saw net income hit P1.3 billion due to contributions from its subsidiaries.

Proceeds from the sale of PNOC's remaining 60-percent stake in PNOC Energy Development Corp. last month was also expected to boost PNOC's 2007 revenues, Cailao said.

Of the P58.5-billion sale price, P11 billion went to PNOC, while the rest went to national government coffers.

Also expected to contribute to PNOC's projected P4-billion net income for the year are PNOC Development and Management Corp. (PDMC) and PNOC Shipping and Transport Corp. (PSTC), which registered a profit of P337 million and P14 million, respectively, in the first three quarters.

PDMC president and chief executive Wilfredo Bacarezza earlier said the company—which is PNOC's real estate arm—should post a profit of P410.7 million this year, a drastic increase from last year's P14.3 million.

The expected profit surge could be attributed to the company's aggressive collection efforts, drastic cost cutting and sale of assets.

PNOC Alternative Fuels Corp., however, had yet to contribute to PNOC's consolidated bottom line.

In the January-September period, PNOC-AFC registered gross revenues of P21 million and a net loss of P56 million.

But for PNOC, in general, Cailao said the future looked rosy.

"We'll definitely have a higher income this year than last," he said.

A deal maker with a hot hand opens his wallet



WARREN E. BUFFETT IS IN NO mood to quit.

At 77, Buffett, the country's most famous investor, is in the midst of his hottest streak in almost a decade. And he is capping his run with a flurry of deal-making.

On Friday, Buffett stunned Wall Street by announcing that he would enter the troubled bond insurance business. He also spent about \$440 million for a unit of ING Groep, the Dutch financial giant.

Three days earlier, on Christmas, he agreed to buy a \$4.5-billion stake in the industrial conglomerate owned by the Prizker family. And a few weeks before that, he waded into the junk bond market, buying \$2.1 billion of debt issued by TXU Corp., the electric utility.

As the fortunes of big Wall Street firms sink, Berkshire Hathaway, the

holding firm that Buffett runs out of Omaha, Neb., is on a tear. Its Class A shares have jumped 27 percent this year, their best showing since 1998, when they soared 52 percent. The Standard & Poor's 500-stock index, by comparison, has gained a mere 4.24 percent this year.

In a telephone interview on Friday, Buffett said the timing of his recent investments was a coincidence. Since the credit crisis erupted this summer, he has repeatedly tried to blunt speculation that he might ride to the rescue of an ailing bank or Wall Street firm.

"We had no compulsion at the start of the year to do anything," Buffett said. "On the other hand, there was no limit to what we could do."

Thousands of investors on and off Wall Street study what Buffett does.

It's no wonder: Over the past four decades he has built Berkshire Hathaway into a \$216-billion company with businesses ranging from insurance and corporate jets to ice cream and underwear. During that time, his company's book value has soared by more than 360,000 percent.

Amid the turmoil in the financial markets this year, Buffett quietly tinkered with his company's vast stock portfolio, which totaled \$78 billion as of Sept. 30.

He has increased his stakes in two major banks, US Bancorp and Wells Fargo, and cast new bets on Burlington Northern, the country's second-largest railroad, and CarMax, the biggest used-car dealership.

With about \$47 billion in cash on hand, Berkshire still has plenty of money for acquisitions. *New York Times News Service*

People, Events & Products

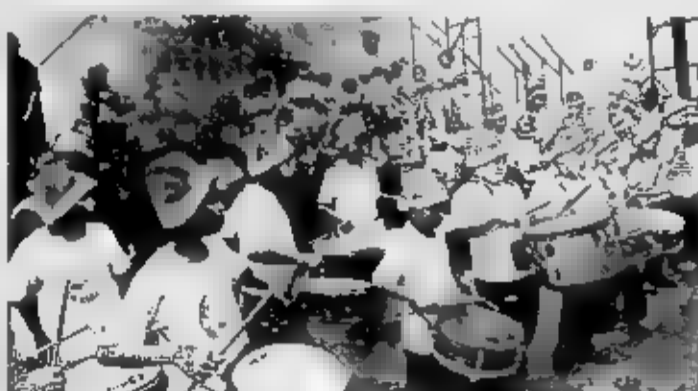
Petron celebrates Christmas with 6,000 children

CELEBRATING THE SEASON OF hope, industry leader Petron Corp recently held its annual gift-giving event Project Joy with 6,000 children. Now on its 10th year, Project Joy has become a tradition for Petron and its business partners to share the fun and excitement of the season, especially with children from underserved communities in Metro Manila.

This year's Project Joy was attended by DSWD Secretary Esperanza Cabral, DSWD Undersecretary Luwalhati Pabro, DepEd NCR Director Dr. Teresita Domalanta, SM Supermalls president Annie Garcia, Public Ministry Director of World Vision Development Foundation and basketball icon Arvin Patrimonio, among others. The activity was held at the sprawling San Miguel by the Bay in Mall of Asia.

It counted the 5,000 scholars of Petron's Tulong Aral program and 1,000 children from DSWD shelter homes and sons and daughters of jeepney drivers as its beneficiaries. More than 500 employee volun-

teers from Petron's different divisions served as elder brothers and sisters to the children and made sure they enjoyed a memorable treat during this half day event.



SONG and dance rendered by scholars of Petron's Tulong Aral

They were joined by DSWD social workers and officials, and teachers from the Tulong Aral partner schools. The globally acclaimed UP Singing Ambassadors also volunteered their time and talent to sing for the participants of the program.

Project Joy is part of Petron's long-term commitment to Fuel HOPE, or Helping Filipino children and the youth Overcome Poverty through Education. The essence of this program is to bring underprivileged children to school, keep them

there, keep them well, and make sure they learn.

Started in 2002, Tulong Aral has not only continuously increased the number of its beneficiaries, but has helped the students perform better in school. At the end of school year 2006-2007, Petron had 380 outstanding students of Tulong Aral, 54 of whom were first honors. More importantly, the first batch of 1,000 Tulong Aral scholars is expected to graduate grade school in March 2008.

In addition to its educational assistance program, the company has been constructing Petron Schools all over the country to ensure that children have a venue for learning. To date, Petron has completed building 21 schools, mostly in Mindanao, where the need is greatest.

In his welcome remarks during Project Joy, Petron Corp chair and CEO Nicasio I. Alcantara reaffirmed Petron's commitment to corporate social responsibility: "Christmas is the season of hope, the season of thanksgiving, and the season of unity. Project Joy grew and Tulong Aral happened because we worked together to secure a better tomorrow for our children. Let us continue to work as one to give our children a future they so deserve."

Petron was joined by its partners namely SM, World Vision, McDonalds Charities, Sa Aklad Sisikat Foundation, and PPRITH.



SUN LIFE FINANCIAL BAGS IABC QUILL ONCE MORE

For the second year in a row, Sun Life Financial Philippines bagged an IABC Philippines Quill, this time for LUV VUL's video presentation aptly dubbed 'Luv Who.' Sun Life is the only insurance company to have made it to the much-coveted winner's circle. LUV VUL's official video garnered a merit award under Communications Skills Divi-

sion-AV category. Shown is Sun Life Financial senior vice president for marketing Raoul Littava flanked by marketing officer Mylena Daez-Lopa and creative and interactive communications manager Don Aaron Peji as they accept the Philippine Quill Award on behalf of Sun Life from ABC board of directors N. Jene Sevilla and Carmencita Arce.

BCDA awards O&M contract to Lopez-led group

THE BASES CONVERSION AND DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (BCDA) has awarded the contract for the operation and maintenance (O&M) of the Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway (SCTEX) to a joint venture group of three companies led by the Lopez Group.

BCDA president and CEO Narciso L. Abaya said the joint venture group is composed of the Lopez-owned First Philippine Holdings Corp (FPHC), Tollways Management Corp (TMC), and Lopez partner Egis Road Operation.

The terms of contract for operation and maintenance will be for six months, renewable for another six months.

The services include functional requirements for the efficient operation of the toll road, such as toll road collection, traffic safety and security management, toll road maintenance, including greenery and landscaping, management services, and all necessary support services.

BCDA president and CEO Narciso L. Abaya signed the contract with First Philippine Holdings Corp president Elpidio Ibanez, Tollways Management Corp president Anthony Mabasa, and Egis Road Operation operations manager Marc Obrowski.

It will be recalled that in September 2007, BCDA invited four short-listed companies to submit proposals in connection with BCDA's need for an interim service provider to operate the SCTEX.

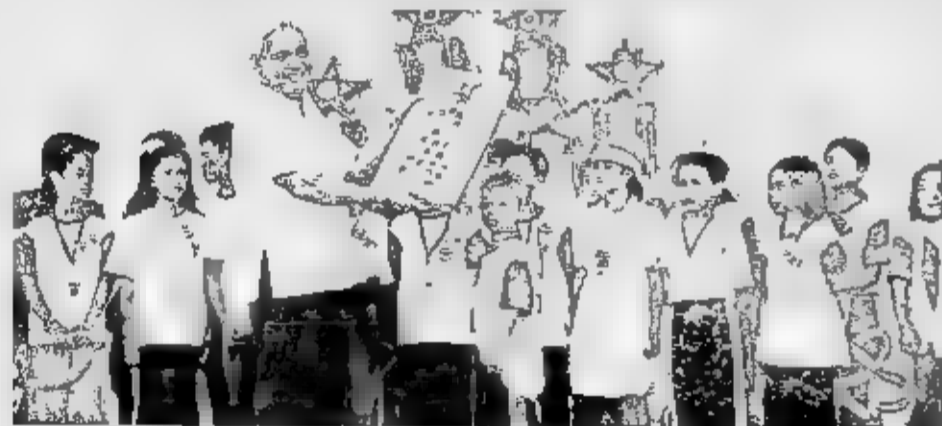
The bidders were FPHC-TMC-Egis joint venture, Metro Pacific Investments Corp (MPIC), Africa Israel Investment (Philippines) Inc, and Derech Eretz Highway Management Joint Venture; UEM-Mara Philippines Corp (UMPC)/PEA Tollways Corp (PEATC); and Philippine National Construction Company.

Only the joint venture of FPHC, TMC and Egis Road submitted eligibility documents and financial proposals which were subsequently declared Single Calculated Responsive Bid.

Operations and maintenance is the final phase in the implementation of the SCTEX project.

The SCTEX, which is 93.77 km long, is composed of two segments: the 50.5-km Subic-Clark segment (Package 1), and the 43.27-km Clark-Tarlac segment (Package 2).

Touted as the country's longest expressway, the SCTEX is targeted for commercial operations in March 2008.



PETRON chair and CEO Nicasio I. Alcantara reads one of the Christmas cards made by one of the 6,000 schoolchildren joining the company's Project Joy.

VILLALON NAMED MEDICAL ONCOLOGY PIONEER IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Professor Antonio M. Villalon, one of the country's top medical oncologists, was recently named one of the 'Pioneers of Medical Oncology in Southeast Asia' during the First Southeast Asia Medical Oncology Forum (1st Seamof) held in celebration of the 40th anniversary of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) in Jakarta, Indonesia in November. Villalon shared the recognition with fellow professors Dr. Harryanto Reksoediputro of Indonesia, Sumitra Thongprasert of Thailand, and Tan Yew Oo of Singapore. All four doctors were recognized for pioneering the development and advancement of medical oncology in their respective countries. Villalon established the first local fellowship training program for medical oncologists that produced the first locally trained Internist-Oncology nationwide. The



Philippines currently has over 120 medical oncologists. Shown during the recognition ceremonies were (from left), Reksoediputro, Thong-

prasert, Dr. Rahim Untoro, MPH (representative of the Ministry of Health of Indonesia), Villalon, and Tan Yew Oo (Singapore).

Forum on Parkinson's disease and the elderly

THE PARKINSON'S SUPPORT GROUP OF THE Philippines (PSGP) Foundation will be holding a meeting on Jan. 6 at 12:30 p.m. at the 14th floor auditorium of the Cathedral Heights Building Complex (CHBC) South Tower of St. Luke's Medical Center. The meeting is free and open to the public, and is being sponsored by Servier Philippines and St. Luke's.

PSGP is a registered non-profit organization that was founded in 1999, and aims to provide support to families and patients with Parkinson's disease, parkinsonism, tremor, dystonia, and other movement disorders. Its

founding chair was the late former Vice President Emmanuel Pelaez.

For the current meeting, the speaker will be one of the country's top orthopedic surgeons, Dr. Cesar Dimayuga. Trained in the United States, Dimayuga will be discussing common orthopedic issues that plague the elderly and patients with Parkinson's disease or parkinsonism, including osteoporosis, arthritis, fractures from falls and frozen shoulder. The lecture will be followed by an open forum.

For more information, call PSGP at 631-1531 or the Movement Disorders Center of St. Luke's at 727-5552.

Philippine tourism efforts lauded in China

THE COUNTRY IS MAKING HEADWAY IN earning the interest of the Chinese travel market, with the Philippine pavilion being recognized in the recent China International Travel Mart (CITM) held in Kunming, China.

Applauded for having the "best participation," the Department of Tourism and the private sector's outstanding promotional efforts included an inviting and colorful booth design, comprehensive marketing materials, the synergy and enthusiasm of the government and private travel sectors, the highly applauded performances of the Bayanihan National Folk Dance Company, and samplings of local beverages.

"The quality of the attendance we received at the fair speaks much of the excitement of the Chinese travel market over our destinations and attractions. We anticipate a surge of arrivals from this part of China as a result of the successful endeavor," said Tourism Secretary Joseph Ace Durano.

China is currently the fourth leading source of tourists and one of the fastest growing markets. A total of 127,954 Chinese came to the Philippines January to October 2007, reflecting a 15.8-percent growth rate over the same period last year.

The tourism chief is confident that the country's participation in the CITM will help set a strong momentum for increasing arrivals in the coming year.

"The CITM is one of the major travel trade events in one of our top source countries. This award reflects the high level of collaboration

between the public and the private sector. It serves to further encourage our industry stakeholders, who put their best foot forward in occasions such as this," Durano added.

CITM is one of the largest travel events in Asia, staged alternately between the cities of Kunming and Shanghai. Over 2,000 exhibitors from 92 countries and regions participated in this year's exhibit held in the sprawling 50,000-sqm Kunming International Convention Center.

The four-day affair drew in an estimated 70,000 travel marketers, industry professionals, media and potential tourists from the province and nearby areas.

The DOT marketing team for China set up the Philippines' 90-sqm booth that featured the tropical beaches, expansive golf courses and colorful fiestas around the islands. Brochures and other materials were also given out to visitors.

Leading the country's delegation was DOT Undersecretary for Planning and Promotion Eduardo Jarque Jr. He was accompanied by DOT Team China Marketing Head Arlene Alipio and team member Marian Obispo. Completing the public sector representation were DOT-Shanghai-based Tourism Attache Gerry Panga and DOT Marketing Representative for Guangzhou Martin Pan.

The department's private sector partners and their counterparts conducted a series of business exchanges. Participating tour operators Winfar Cebu Travel & Tours, Direction Travel & Tours, CK Philippines International Travel and Kingstar Travel & Tours met with

China-based travel agents for possible joint marketing activities.

Top local budget airline Cebu Pacific Air and China charter consortium Yexing Company were also present to discuss transportation services between the Philippines and Kunming.

Representatives of the Philippine Retirement Agency put forth the country as an ideal destination for retiring citizens as it showcased various health and wellness attractions.

The table-top transactions were complemented with ample servings of mango juice and coffee from well-known Filipino brewer Figaro. Samplings of these beverages were also handed out to pavilion guests to give them a refreshing taste of the islands.

The Bayanihan Philippine National Folk Dance Company regaled guests with song-and-dance numbers showcasing the country's diverse and colorful culture. The 12-member troupe drew in a huge crowd during their performances on both the main exhibit stage and the booth.

"Our activities were an instant hit with the visitors. Cameras were clicking away during the Bayanihan shows. Long lines formed in front of the refreshments kiosk. Transactions and agreements were closed. This multi-sensory take on presenting the country helped us drum up interest from potential tourists. More importantly, our private sector partners were pleased with the quality of discussions they had with their Chinese counterparts," Jarque narrated.



'ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS' PRESS SCREENING

The phenomenal singing trio of Alvin, Theodore and Simon harks the opening of 2008 in the invitation-only press screening of the CGI-live action movie 'Alvin and the Chipmunks' set on Jan. 5 at the Glorietta 4 cinema. 'Alvin and the Chipmunks' tells the exciting story of how Dave first meets the singing animals and how, after initial reluctance, he befriends them. A songwriter himself (Dave Seville, Jason Lee) collaborates with the talented trio and helps to build their careers, little realizing how they would resonate with audiences. But trouble emerges in the form of Dave's college friend Ian (David Cross), now a successful but

ruthless music industry exec who wants to exploit The Chipmunks in order to profit himself. The movie, a funny and warm-hearted film based on the well-loved musical trio which has been a part of American culture for 50 years, retains the personalities of the popular animals and of their dad and manager Dave. Alvin and the Chipmunks' is an entirely contemporary movie combining the latest computer generated effects (CGI) with live action and a strong, highly relevant story. 'Alvin and the Chipmunks' opens Jan. 16 in theaters nationwide from 20th Century Fox to be distributed by Warner Bros.

BUSINESSMonday

Executives' hopes for business in 2008

By Margarie Q. Espino
and Tina A. Dumiao

Exporting to the Asean

"WE GREW MORE THAN 25 percent in 2007 and we are gearing for the export to Asean and the Middle East where there are many similarities and opportunities yet to be tapped."

Cecilio Pedro
Lamoian Corp. (makers of Hapee toothpaste)

Bullish about real estate

Shang Properties experienced robust growth this year. Our Shang Grand Tower was sold out while our St. Francis Shangri-la Place residential development is 70 percent sold. Occupancy plus lease rentals and/or sales for both the Shangri-La Plaza Mall and The Enterprise Center exceeded budget.

Revenues [this year] grew by close to 80 percent compared to 2006.

In June of this year, Edsa



JOSE E. B. Antonio, Century Properties
RUDY ESPINOSA

Properties Holdings Inc., the property development arm of the Kuok Group in the Philippines, and Kuok Philippine Properties Inc., which owns a landbank of prime properties all over the country, merged to form Shang Properties. This merged entity endeavors to be a key player in the high-end real

We ask movers in the economic sector their projections for the year to come

estate market. Toward the end of this year, we signed a purchase agreement that will enable us to acquire majority control of the Enterprise Center. We also acquired another prime property in Fort Bonifacio Global City.

We are bullish about the Philippine real estate market in 2008 and expect that Shang Properties will continue to grow. We have several new projects in the pipeline and announcements will be made in due course.

Andres D. Bautista
CEO, Kuok Group Philippines

Realize sales potential

Focused on renovating Rustan's. Shopwise stores need to be updated and make the existing stores more competitive by improving service and range of products expanded. Consumer demand was better than 2006 although the Christmas season was late. People are smarter—they hold on to their money to get better deals. Consumer spending is up by 7.8 percent.

The demand for gift baskets this season is high. Health and beauty products are flying off the shelves.

People are buying quality products with reasonable price tags. This cuts across all income groups.

Next year we will focus on the full sales potential under the new management [the Shopwise group under the Rustan Supercenters Inc. took over the management of Rustan's Supermarket and Fresh outlets last year]. "We are not yet oper-



DONNIE V. Tantoco, Rustan's Supercenters Inc.
AUGUSTO DELACRUZ

ating in our full sales potential. **Benvenuto Tantoco III**
President, Rustan's Supercenters Inc.

Great 2008

2007 was good, we're looking at a great 2008. The market psychology is positive and the macro fundamentals are good. We hope interest rates stay at current levels. We're looking at launching four products in 2008.

Jose E. B. Antonio
Chair, Century Properties



CECILIO Pedro, Lamoian Corp.

Cautious about real estate

We had a fabulous 2007. Both property and lotto sales were very good. We are cautious on property [2008] because of subprime woes in the US, and the glut in local condo supply.

Lotto sales will remain strong and maintain a 15 to 20 percent growth rate.

Willy Ocier
Vice chair, Belle Resources Corp.
Chair, Pacific Online Systems Corp.

Int'l security threats for US businesses

WASHINGTON—US BUSINESSES faced varied threats in 2007—including cyber attacks in Europe, theft of intellectual property in Asia, natural disasters in Latin America, terrorism on many continents—according to a yearend analysis by the US State Department's Overseas Security Advisory Council.

In Europe, two weeks of attacks by computer interlopers that crippled government and corporate websites beginning in late April raised a new worry that US companies also could be vulnerable to attack by computer.

"It is vital to recognize that these attacks can easily be replicated against a new target, including the US private sector," warned the council, which was established in 1985 to promote security cooperation between the State Department and American businesses. The report was released on Thursday.

Among 10 security issues cited in the report, the council also warned of rising homegrown political radicalism and terrorism in Europe.

Intellectual property theft, terrorism, natural disasters and political instability were listed as the most serious security challenges in Asia.

The threat from fraud and theft of trade secrets has been rising exponentially, the report said. It cited China and India as countries of greatest concern and warned that much of the damage comes from within companies.

"Osac advises that US companies and other entities should take strong precautions against the insider threat, to safeguard communications systems, and for the safekeeping of sensitive data," the report said.

Continuing political instability in Lebanon and terror attacks in Algeria were cited as the most alarming trends in the Middle East and North Africa.

In other parts of Africa, the report raised alarms about rising crime rates in many cities and a dramatic increase in kidnappings in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria that target workers of Western-owned oil companies.

Earthquakes and storms plagued US business in Latin America in 2007, but the report also cited antagonism from governments, including those of Venezuela and Bolivia.

"Political conflict has emerged as a concern to the US private sector in a few Latin American countries whose leaders have nationalized private industry and campaigned against US interests through proposed constitutional referenda," the reports said.

The council's executive director, Todd Brown, urged US companies to take heed of the developing threats and learn to protect themselves.

"Those US entities that take proactive security postures, manage their risks and develop an internal culture of resiliency often are better able to survive and even thrive in riskier environments or in the aftermath of disasters," he said. AP

China falls for Christmas stores

BEIJING—CHINA'S SHOPPING MALLS in late December leave little doubt that the country has been smitten by Christmas, if not in quite the way devout Christians might hope.

Christmas has secured a spot on the Chinese calendar as a cherished excuse to buy, buy, buy. And while Christianity is indeed spreading in the officially atheist country, many shoppers have only a faint idea of the holiday's religious connection.

But their manner of celebration is sure to win the blessing of at least one group:

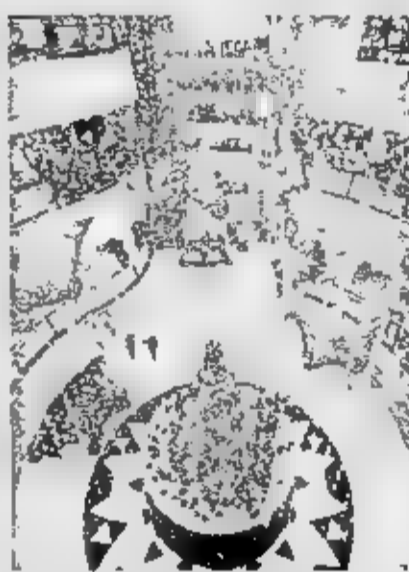
"It's not really a real holiday," said Benny Zhang, 29, a computer programmer outside a Beijing mall with his wife. "It's just a nice atmosphere for shopping and a chance to swap gifts with each other." Economists long despaired that the Chinese propensity to save, not spend, was slowing up trouble should China's exports falter, and hurting the world economy because it was not buying enough from

Even as China has become wealthier, the savings culture has been reinforced by the dismantling of the social security system, which forced ordinary people to keep enough money on hand for education, medicine and old age.

But Christmas reveals that Chinese consumers, buoyed by fast-rising incomes, have now burst on the scene with a fervor for shopping that someday might rival their American counterparts.

"It is hard to get away from cultural norms," said Anna Kalifa, head of research in Beijing for Jones Lang LaSalle, a real estate management firm.

"What is also true is there is a new generation that is coming along and really changing things. They value quality and they want to spend money," she said.



CHINA'S shopping malls leave little doubt that the country has been smitten by Christmas, if not in quite the way devout Christians might hope. REUTERS

Seven of the world's 10 biggest shopping malls will be in China by 2010, Kalifa said. Hard numbers show why: Retail sales rose 18.8 percent in November from a year earlier, marking the fastest growth since 1999, the National Bureau of Statistics reported this month.

It's Christmas, sort of

Bedecked in trees and bunting, with carols piped through their speakers, Chinese malls are thronged by shoppers at Christmas and look much like ones anywhere else in the world.

The difference lies just below the surface.

Wang Lijun knows her Santa Claus hat and coat are supposed to lure customers to

the buffet house in the Beijing mall where she works but beyond that she is confused.

"The boss makes us wear these," the restaurant hostess, 25, said. "I have no idea what they mean." But the hat and coat do the trick. Business is brisk in the restaurant behind Wang as waiters clad in similar Santa Claus outfits scurry among the tables, dodging the poinsettia and fake gifts scattered about the floor.

That the gift-buying element of Christmas has spread faster than the religious rituals of the holiday is seen by some Chinese Christians as more an opportunity than a worry.

"It's nothing to be disappointed about," Liu Baonan, vice president of the China Patriotic Catholic Association, said. "It's good for understanding. From our perspective, it's good for spreading the idea of Christmas." Liu, who often echoes government opinion on church affairs, said Chinese shouldn't get caught up in the commercialism and should instead view the Christmas message as one of world peace much like the "harmonious society" promoted by authorities.

About 40 million Chinese—or 3 to 4 percent of the 1.3 billion population—are Christian, according to the US Central Intelligence Agency.

But precise estimates are hard to come by, as devotees are divided between "above ground" churches approved by the ruling Communist Party and "underground" churches, wary of government ties, that have grown in popularity.

Shopping spree

So long as shopping outpaces churchgoing, Christmas will cheer the hearts of government officials who have been trying to boost consumption to lessen the economy's reliance on exports. REUTERS

LTO license renewal

A FOR PROCESS IMPROVEMENT, C for governance.

Last Dec. 6, while I was in Subic, I discovered that my license had expired last year!

Friday morning, I decided to renew my license immediately. I asked our messenger where I should renew my license. He said that LTO now had offices at malls and MRT/LRT stations.

The Ayala MRT Station LTO Office was my nearest and most convenient location.

I took the MRT from Boni to the Ayala Station. I give LTO an "A" for moving closer to its customers.

I found the LTO office slightly before 11 a.m. and got my renewal document.

Whoops, a physical exam (eyes) and drug test is needed. Another A: There is an accredited physical exam and drug test clinic next to the LTO office.

Good instruction giving you steps 1 to 4. In window 1, you pay and get the drug test and medical exam forms.

When I was filling up the form, I was wondering why I had to swear

that I don't take drugs when I was going to have a urine test.

When I got my new license in about an hour, I understood the need for swearing.

They can't do the urine test quickly enough so they work on an exception basis. If you fail the drug test, they can subsequently cancel your license. Another "A" in customer convenience and process improvement.

The next step was the physical exam (essentially stepping on an old bathroom weighing scale and trying to read the letters on a mirror).

I got worried because neither my bad left eye nor my good artificial lens right eye could read below the second line of letters. So I guessed and the attendant still said OK. I thought I would have to go to an eye doctor. But apparently I "passed"? Another "A" for customer convenience.

The next day, I was surprised that I could read license plates of vehicles 10 to 20 meters in front of me.

The next step was a webcam camera.

I then got my papers from the clinic

MAPPING THE FUTURE

Manuel A. Alcuaz Jr



cashier window. It must have been 11:30 a.m. when I got back to the LTO office next door.

There was a sign that said come back at 1 p.m.

But they accommodated me. They took another webcam picture and I signed on an electronic pad.

Sat down and waited 5 minutes to be called to pay cashier in window 3.

Waited a few minutes more and got my new license! All in slightly more than one hour.

Definitely, an "A" for the LTO process improvement team!

They have made great improvements. I remember that in the bad old days, you only got an official receipt after a few hours of waiting and had to come back a few months later for

the license.

But I noticed that a professional license renewal is P400 and nonpro is P180. Not cheap but fair.

On the other hand, I had to pay P250 for the drug test and P100 for medical (eye test and weight).

This means that for nonprofessional drivers' urine and medical tests, contractors' revenues are 1.944 times LTO's revenue.

For professional drivers, the private contractors' revenues are 87.5 percent of LTO's.

From January to October 2007, the LTO license renewals and issues were as follows:

- Professional Renewal - 1,206,633
- New - 255,832
- Non-Professional Renewal - 473,877
- New - 261,633
- Total for 10 months - 2,197,975
- Assuming that nationwide rates are the same as in Makati.
- Drug test revenues would be P549,493,750 (2,197,975 x 250)
- And medical (eye) test revenues

would be P 219,797,500 (2,197,975 x 100)

A friend of mine that was in the drug test business says the urine drug test kits cost P80 each. She felt P250 per test was fair.

I feel that more competitive bidding could significantly reduce this

I think that the eye testing should use more professional equipment or at least validate their tests against that in professional eye clinics.

I therefore give LTO a "C" for governance. But LTO deserves congratulations for its excellent business process reengineering of the license renewal process.

For a broader perspective of process improvement in government, refer to Ver Peña's Sept. 24, 2007 article.

(The article reflects the personal opinion of the author and does not reflect the official stand of the Management Association of the Philippines. The author is president of Systems Sciences Consult Inc. Feedback at mapsec@globenet.com.ph)



LIFESTYLE

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Kublai Ponce Millan's sculptural odyssey across Mindanao is a virtual tapestry of form and tradition, brave and proud, monumental in size, scope and vision

By Johnathan Libarios Rondina
Contributor

MANY DABAWENYOS consider Davao City's newly opened People's Park a very timely holiday gift. The P71-million, four hectare facility includes a mini-rainforest, series of dancing fountains, automated waterfall, winding bicycle trails and jogging paths, picnic groves, multi-purpose durian-domed hall.

Since its formal opening on Dec. 15, residents and tourists alike have come here in droves, basking in the warm sunshine, communing in an atmosphere of graciousness and unapologetic holiday spirit.

Entrance to the park is free but, as Mayor Rodrigo Duterte is quick to point out, not without a few restrictions. Vendors are not allowed inside the park and only Filipino music will be aired through its high-tech sound system.

Public displays of affection, at least those of the libat kind, are strictly banned from the premises and monitored via strategically positioned CCTV surveillance cameras.

'Lumad' Images

That the park is a showcase of Mindanao culture is evident in the many sculptures of lumad children in colorful traditional garb found throughout the recreational facility.

These sculptures by artist Kublai Ponce Millan are a testament to Mindanao's glorious heritage and a statement of unfettered optimism for its future.

Millan's oval-faced, wide-eyed urchins evoke the calm and genteel demeanor that characterizes the Dabawenyo. In this open and inviting landscape, people and sculptures come together, grateful in bountiful harvest, joyful and united in shared art, tradition and experience.

Children prominently figure in Millan's more recent works, an obvious effect of fatherhood for the Cotabato-born artist.

"We really have to start thinking about the kind of world we are creating for our children," he said.

To make sure his message does not fall on deaf ears, Millan has literally taken to the streets by transforming public spaces into broad canvases that depict indigenous pride, peace, ecumenical spirituality and ecological harmony.

SCULPTURAL/C2



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Sculptural showcase . . .

From page C1

Big body of work

The People's Park is but one stop in Millan's sculptural odyssey across Mindanao where, at 33, he is a legend of sorts, with a body of work that surpasses those of other artists more senior in years.

Indeed, Millan's oeuvre is monumental not only for its size but also for its courage, sense of pride and artistic vision. With a frenetic energy masked by a quieter disposition, Millan is weaving a massive tapestry of form and tradition throughout the island.

Today, Millan's gigantic sculptures punctuate the Philippines' southern landscape and are becoming tourist attractions that elicit awe and admiration.

Visitors arriving at the new Davao airport are welcomed by a giant durian-womb. Residents in Sultan Kudarat marvel at a colossal sword. Revelers on Camiguin are enraptured by forest diwata. Pilgrims find solace at the Tagum Cathedral.

Elsewhere in Mindanao, Millan's creatures, drawn from such disparate inspirations as folklore, urban myth and current events, are conversation pieces that captivate, shock and provoke.

Also soon to rise in Buda, the area where Bukidnon meets Davao, is a 75-ft Buddha statue. In Millan's Buddha in Buda, Zen spirituality meets lumad sensibility.

9/11 experience

But, like all great odysseys, Millan's artistic journey is not without the requisite, life-altering descent to hell that prefigures redemption.

In the post-9/11 paranoia that shaped American foreign policy after the World Trade Center attacks in 2001, Millan was forced to cancel a scheduled exhibit in the United States when his visa application was denied.

"I was very angry," he recalled. "This is a free planet. Who were they to tell me where I can and cannot go?"

The artistic spirit in Millan felt bound, gagged, confined. It was only a matter of time before his fury would be unleashed in an explosion of creative expression.

Unconventional

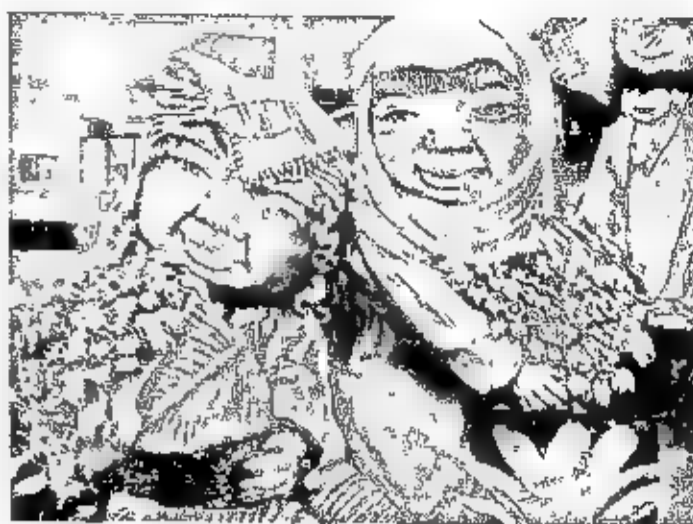
Millan found refuge in Ponce Suites, a family-run hotel in Davao's Bajada district. There, the artist found a blank slate, begging to be drawn upon. And so he drew, painted, installed, sculpted, often going without sleep for days.

The product was a one-of-a-kind hotel teeming with ants crawling through ceilings, with walls nary an inch uncovered with paintings, and where winged giants spilled over to the narrow street outside. It was, for some, a disturbance of the peace, but in this prolific journey through catharsis, Millan found transcendence.

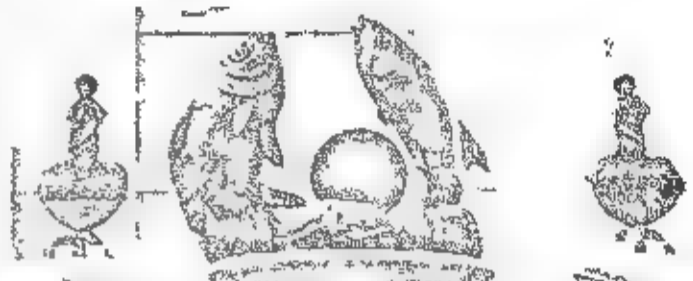
It was also then that Millan discovered the power of three-dimensional form.

"Sculptures naturally invite attention," he explained. "And big sculptures capture the imagination."

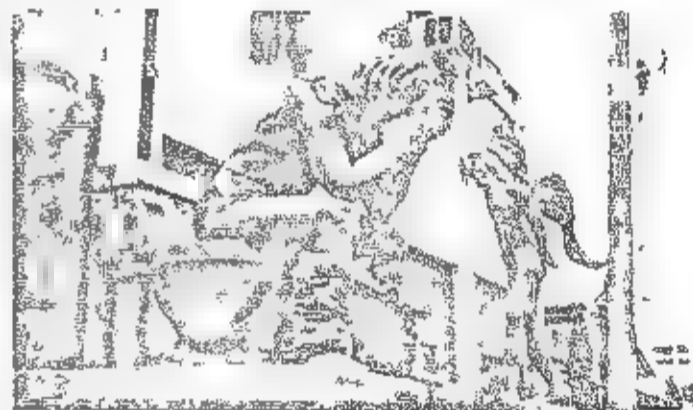
In this marriage of form and size, Millan found a potent tool, and a unique voice that is now leading the way in contemporary Mindanao art.



"LUMAD Children" 2



FISH and bread sculpture grace Tagum Cathedral's entranceway.



AN URBAN thinker and a sad angel spill over from Ponce Suites to the street. Right: Sultan Kudarat's kamplonan



A GIANT durian welcomes guests arriving at the new Davao airport.

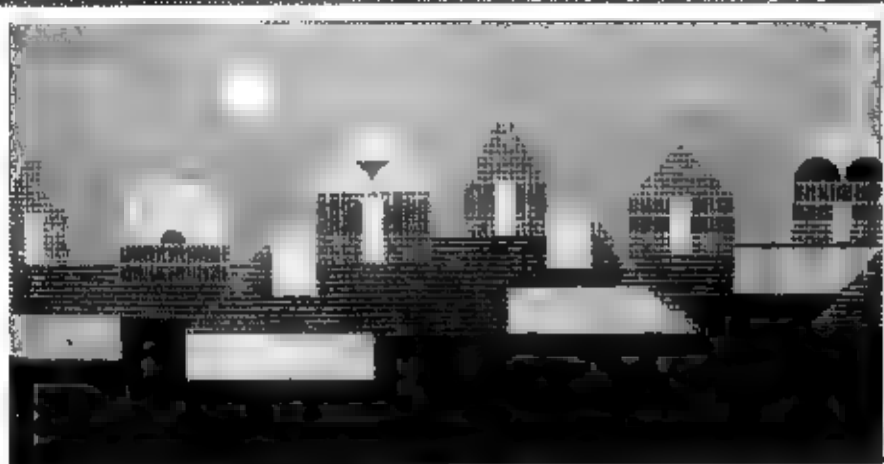


People who come face to face with Millan often find it difficult to reconcile the artist's painful timidity with his larger-than-life works. A group of students who interviewed him for a school project were so surprised by his diminutive stature and sage-like countenance they exclaimed, "Ay, ikaw lang pala si Millan."

There is, of course, much more to the artist. Among the lumads, it is a common belief that a human spirit dwells in his good works long after death, contrary to the Shakespearean admonition that "the evil that men do liveth after them, the good of ten interred with their bones."

In his journey from rejection to redemption, Millan makes a bid for immortality one giant sculpture at a time.

E-mail the author at nathrondina@gmail.com



"CITIES of the Past"

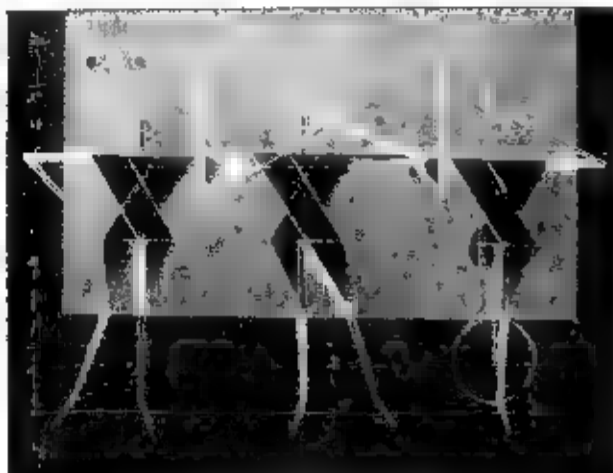
Top Luz series on display

NATIONAL Artist Arturo Luz's foremost series on "Temples," "Cities of the Past" and "Performers" are on show until today in Galerie Raphael.

Included in the show are several major pieces such as Luz's "Cities of the Past" and 1992's "Borobudur."

Also in the show are two acrylic-on-canvas works—"Three Performers" and "Two Musicians and a Juggler."

Galerie Raphael is at Unit 2C-06, 2/F, The Piazza, Serendra Mall, Bonifacio Global City, Taguig. Call 8563034 or visit www.galerieraphael.com



"THREE Performers"



"MADJAPAHIT Pots"

Images of longing and dread

GERALDINE JAVIER BEGINS THE YEAR with an exhibit that explores the human condition through cautionary tales and stark images: "Living Images, Leaden Lives," at the Art Center, SM Megamall, Jan. 5-20.

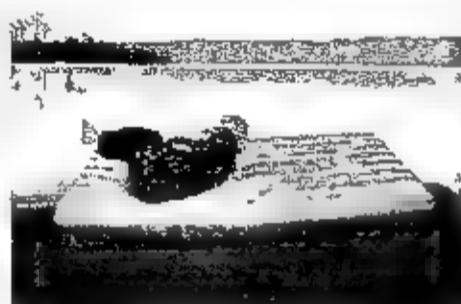
Javier's paintings almost always leave you with conflicting emotions of longing and dread, the ambiguity of fear and desire, notes a fellow artist.

The images seem to activate dormant emotions and awaken irrational, unarticulated childhood anxieties—letting viewers in on sensitive situations and captivating them with her keen attention to detail and recurring motifs.

Viewers are also prepared to see the visual twists and turns, as if leading them from one highlight to another.

Where does Javier get all these inspiration for her works? Is it from her experience as a nurse that gave her first-hand accounts of daily human drama in the confines of the emergency ward? Or did pop culture lend a hand to motivate her to go for more dramatic elements?

The diptych "Morning Doesn't Always Mean Sunshine" dwells on old age and youth. One is a headless figure of an elderly woman, the other is that of a young girl on a swing—both images reflecting how the passage of time has affected them, physi-

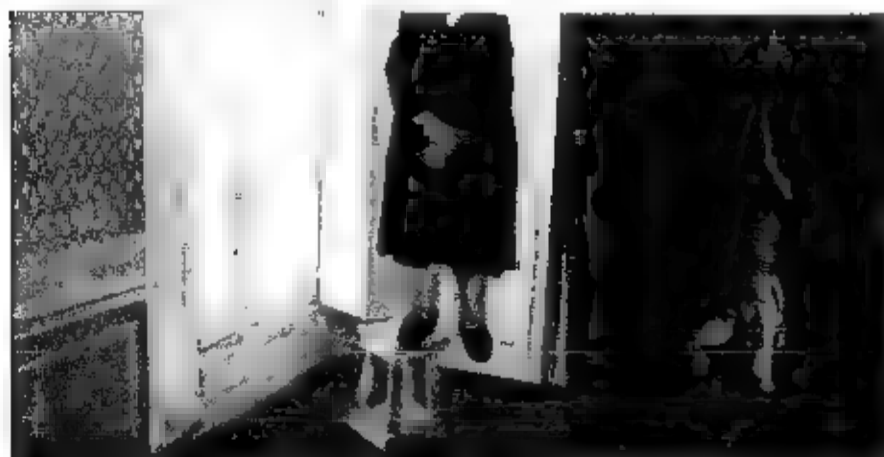


"LAST Thing I Want to See"

cally and emotionally.

"Life Ends at Second Childhood" features an ancient figure struggling before a bathroom sink. Supported by an aluminum walker, the viewer senses both helplessness and hopelessness. The angle of focus gives the viewer a child's perspective, imbued with brooding apprehension, and a curious detachment of observing someone else's struggle.

"The Last Thing I Want to See" depicts a derelict figure in a fetal position on a mangy mattress, resembling a raft on expansive body of water. This is a forlorn image of world-weariness, a man adrift in a sea of serenity offering both acceptance and deliverance.



"MORNING Doesn't Always Mean Sunshine"



UNCONVENTIONAL center. Davao's Ponce Suites is teeming with giant ants.

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Nativity eggs on exhibit



SAVADOR CHING'S "EGGCOLOGY," A TRAVELING collection featuring eggs as a discourse on birth, is the yearend exhibit of 1/0f Gallery in Shops at Serendra, Bonifacio Global City, Taguig.

Although the show is timed for the Yuletide because of its theme of "Nativity," the series really alludes to the Western practice of using Easter eggs as symbols of the reborn Christ. For instance, "Bunso" is a metaphorical installation connoting the process of gestation, birth and nurturing. "Eggcoology" runs until Jan. 12. Call 9013152.



"BUNSO"



VICENTE Manansala

Pinoy masters on exhibit

GALERIA FERNAN do Artes (Casa Susana, Casa Vicente, Madingal Avenue, Alabang) is holding the show "Maestro, Filipino," featuring the works of Filipino masters Guillermo Tolentino and Vicente Manansala. Also included are works by Oscar Zamalmeda, Gus Albor and Caloy Gabuco. The show runs until Dec. 31. Call 9060809 or 0928-2188516.



GUILLERMO Tolentino

Two painters'

From page C4

dre des Arts et Lettres from the French government.

But as this show demonstrates, he is still experimenting with the basic elements. Already a master artist, Cosio can still be playful with color and form. And that's what makes his art ever so young.

Southern weave

Related to Cosio's abstracted representation of fiber art are Leopoldo Aguilar's exquisite pieces in acrylic on canvas recently displayed in ArtistSpace, 2/F Glass Wing, Ayala Museum, Makati Ave. cor. De la Rosa St., Makati City.

At first glance, we could see this art falls on geometric abstraction, a lot of bull's-eye targets reminiscent of Kenneth Noland and Josef Albers in their homage to the circle and the square.

To describe his art-making, Aguilar has coined a portmanteau term, *simplicated*, to mean "both simple and complicated." Because though he employs the purest form—the circle, the simple line—it actually conceals complex motifs and complicated patterns.

He says he has drawn inspiration from the *tugaya* design of the Maranao of Lanao del Sur. His composition has been derived from patterns of their brassware and ethnic weave, the *malong*.

These are patterns composed of series of straight lines (*lapis*), circular designs (*kati-ambang*), and a range of geometric variations. From them Aguilar has created richly hued forms that resemble color wheels, target marks, even a tree's annual rings.

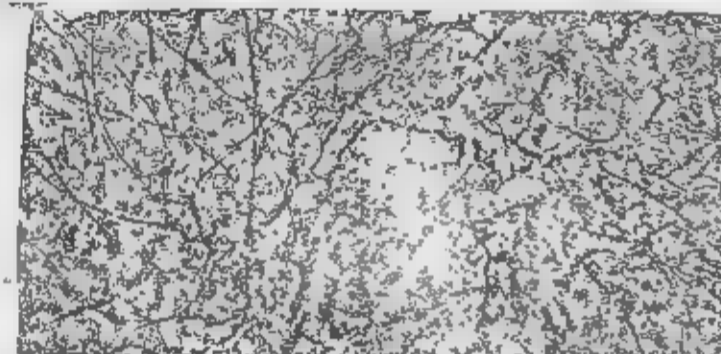
Local sources

"Father & Son" consists of two clusters of concentric circles in various tones of brown, purple, gray and slate-green against a plane of umber. With one cluster half-bigger than the other, the artist wittily describes the composition as "hierarchy in circles."

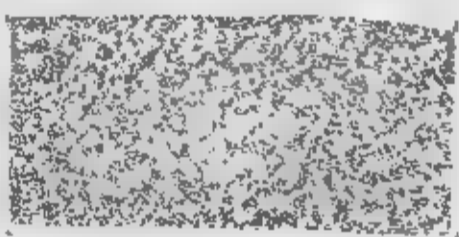
"Light Post" consists of three such clusters in various tones of brown, orange, red, slate-blue, white, black and violet against slate-gray. With the third cluster cut up into two rectangles placed right under the two other circular forms like sticks to lollipops, the artist describes the composition as a "mandala within a standing figure."

The exhibition note reveals that, as a Fine Arts freshman at University of the Philippines Cebu College in search of directions, Aguilar sought out local artistic sources. "Local expressions continue to be a source of inspiration for him," it adds.

The simple form also belies a complicated technique. Devising tools he calls "applicators," he transformed plastic tubes filled with acrylic pigment and tipped them with air pin needles, then applied the pigment directly on the canvas, producing fine quick



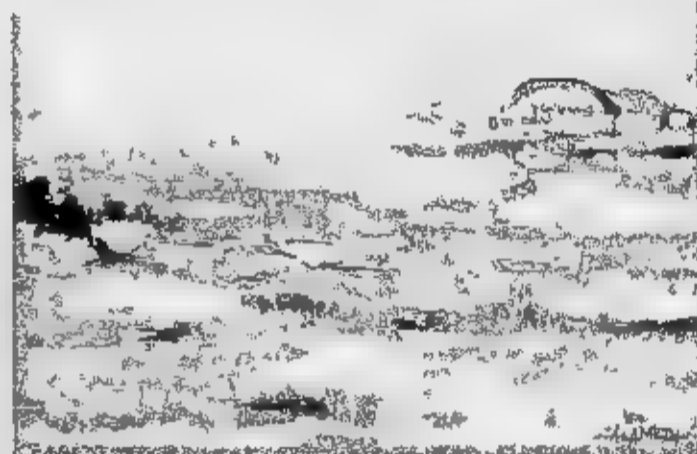
COSIO'S abstracted representations of Cordilleran weave



strokes and a textured surface.

"The distinctive linear marks," says the note, "clearly respond to his concern for finding ways to paint other than using the conventional paintbrush."

The art of the young is ever ingenious, making room for deeper explorations and bigger discoveries. Aguilar is neither the discoverer of such tools nor the first explorer of such technique, but such quest certainly makes art richer.



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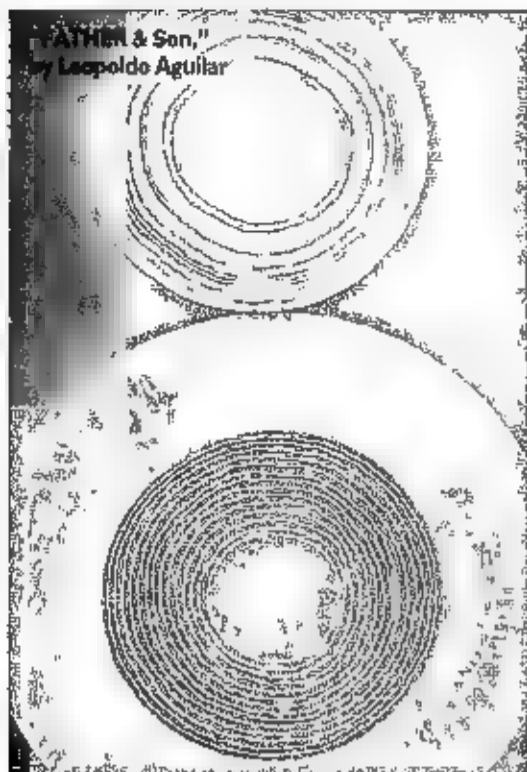
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Two painters' take on fiber art

By Constantino C. Tejero

HERE IS ANOTHER CASE OF convergence of abstraction and figuration. Almost inevitably, the twain do meet in the latest work of Allan Cosío.

In the last few years, this artist had been mounting exhibits of his expressionist portraits and unpressionistic landscapes. Recently he has taken as subject something minute and blown it up, that is, magnified the form to extreme close-up till it has assumed an abstracted look.

We're talking of his exhibit of pieces in acrylic and latex paint on rubber, ongoing through December in Le Soufflé at Amoroso Square in Rockwell Center, Amoroso Drive, Makati City.

These are nearly 50 pieces of varying sizes that appear to be the typical spattering of Abstract Expressionism. Seen up close, the pieces look no more than random brushwork, swirls and splashes and clusters of innumerable dots of pure color, both brilliant and muted, chromatic and neutral. Seen at a distance, however, each piece slowly transforms into a rigorous composition of patterns.

In the late 1980s, Cosío had worked with the weavers of Benguet and created one-of-a-kind wall hangings, some of which he exhibited along with pieces by American fiber artists and those by Austrian fiber artists in two shows at the Metropolitan Museum of Manana.

After almost two decades, Cosío must have been so much fascinated with the intricacy of motif, fineness of execution and rich color tonality of the ethnic weave of our northern folk that he is still trying to replicate it even in painting.

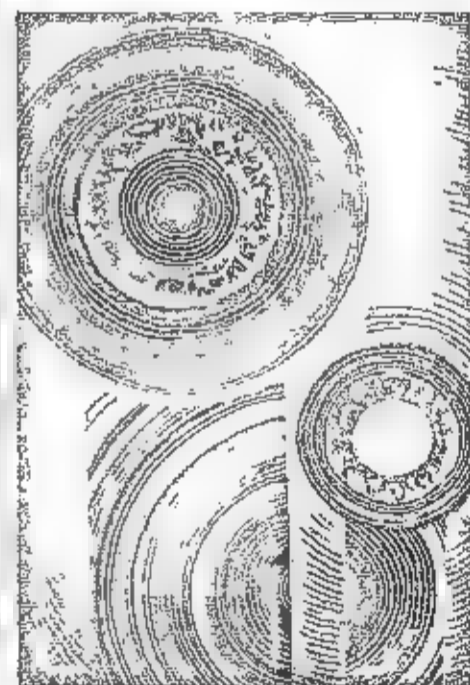
Northern weaver

These paintings are, of course, representations of the fiber art of the Philippine Cordillera. They may be taken as abstract but they're actually no more abstract than the very fabric—every line and thread, every hue and pattern—of the textile they represent. Each piece, in fact, displays the intricateness, delicacy and bold colorism of that weave.

If these paintings look too decorative for one's taste, that's because they're exactly meant to be decorative, representing as they do ethnic tapestries and indigenous wall hangings. It's not trompe l'oeil but rather impressionism, and what the artist does not replicate with actual material he duplicates in virtual form.

Active on the local art scene since the early '70s, Cosío has worked in various mediums and experimented in a range of styles and techniques. He received a grant from the Pollock-Krasner Foundation of New York, a cultural award from the city of Manila, and the rank of Chevalier de l'Or-

TWO PAINTERS? C3



"LIGHT Post," by Aguilar



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Music movers of 2007



RUSSIAN
pianist Sergey
Kuznetsov



YOUNG pianist Davio Licad
Meneses

Despite lack
of support, the
performing arts
continue to thrive

By Pablo A. Tariman
Contributor

FOR HER triumphant team-up with pianist Cristine Coyuto, in a fresh rendering of the Grieg concerto and her powerful Fifth Symphony by Tchaikovsky with the Manila Symphony Orchestra, my Conductor of the Year is Helen Quach, still a dynamo of the baton in her 60s.

For winning the choral Olympics twice—first in 1997 and this year—my Choir of the Year is the Philippine Madrigal Singers, under new conductor Mark Anthony Carpio.

For electrifying Metro Manila's guitar community and for reaching out to Manila guitar teachers and students before and after his Manila debut, my Classical Guitarist of the Year is Uruguay-born Alvaro Pierri.

For enchanting both young and old in one concert, my Piano Team-up of the Year is the mother-and-son team of Cecile Licad and Otavio Licad Meneses, with the Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra under Eugene Castillo.

For making Manila audiences fall in love with the violin many times over, and for raising piano consciousness as well in Palayan City, Nueva Ecija, and in Bacolod City, my Violinist of the Year is Romanian Alexandru Tomescu.

For bringing back the beauty of the baritone voice to Manila audiences and for that landmark recital at the Philamlife Theater with the University of Santo Tomas Singers, my choice for Baritone of the Year is Noel Azcona.

She is always the perfect choice to accompany both singers and instrumentalists and her latest team-up with Tomescu and Azcona this year drew raves from both critics and audiences.

Therefore, my Assisting Artist of the Year is Mary Anne Espina, who deserves her recent A.i.w. Award many times over.

For wrapping up a total of 273 educational concerts nationwide and in some cities in Asia and United States, my Music Missionaries of the Year are

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Sta. Rosa Laguna | Sarnall | Zabarte-Calocan

Johnny Yu slates marimba concert

By Antonio C. Hila
Contributor

MARIMBA ARTIST JOHNNY Yu will give a concert on Jan. 13, 4:30 p.m., at the St. Stephen Auditorium of St. Stephen High School on Masangkay Street, Manila.

Joining him on stage are Dean Raul Sunico of the University of Santo Tomas Conservatory of Music; tenor Conrado "Dindo" Ong III; and St. Stephen Chorale conducted by Patricia Lim.

The program will consist of light classics as well as European, American and Philippine works such as Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue," and standard choral pieces such as "Majesty" and "My Tribute."

Presented by the St. Stephen Alumni Association, of which Yu was previously a board member, the show is a thanksgiving concert.

Yu survived a stroke three years ago, and has gone back to playing the marimba, his avocation.

"Music is all for the glory of God, transcending all religions," he said.

A stockbroker by profession, Yu is an accomplished marimba artist who made his debut recital at Carnegie Hall in New York City in 1973.

After finishing a business degree at De La Salle University-Manila, he went to Sta. Isabel College and earned his marimba course with professor Ernestina Crisologo-José.

He trained with Walter Rosenburger, percussionist of New York Philharmonic Orchestra, professor Broadway Spinney of the Manhattan School of Music; and José Bethancourt, Guatemala's foremost marimba

teacher.

He was active on the concert stage before the stroke, and had premiered many foreign as well as Philippine compositions. He gave a command performance in honor of President Chiang Kai Shek on the occasion of the Taiwanese leader's 80th birthday. He has performed as well in the United States and Canada.

He has played with the Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra and given concert tours in Cebu, Bacolod, Iloilo, Davao, Zamboanga, Naga, Baguio, Dadiangas and Jolo. He is a recording artist for Legacy Music Word Corporation and Praise, Inc.

Rarely heard on the concert stage, the marimba is a deep-toned Mexican cousin of the xylophone. Its keys are strips of hardwood or bone, cut in such a way that each bar has a different tone scale.

Under each strip is a resonator that is opened at the top but closed at the bottom by a thin bladder. It matches the tone of its key: the lower the tone, the longer the bar and the deeper the resonator.

The wooden keys are arranged like the keyboard of a piano but vary in size, ranging from large bass keys to small high keys.

Striking the keys with a pair of mallets produces tone. Two types of mallets are used for playing. Mallets made from hard rubber are used for brilliant, loud, percussive sound.

Mallets wound with yarn are used for mellow tones. The player uses two mallets for past passages and four mallets for chords.

Paskong Himig champion

The Pasig City Concert Choir composed of employees and residents of Pasig City is this year's champion in the adult category of the

13th Annual Paskong Himig, a contest for solo voice and choir.

Winning by a unanimous decision over 10 other finalists, the choir sang the required kundiman warm-up piece, Constancio de Guzman's "Bayan Ko," arranged by National Artist Lucio San Pedro for mixed choir, and Ramon Santos' "Tatlong Matikling Awit ng Pasko."

Second and third places went to St. John Bosco Chorale, the defending champion, and Coro de San Sebastian, respectively.

The board of judges were composed of Fidel C. Calalang of the UST Singers; Rodolfo "Boy" Delamante of the DLSU-Manila Chorale; and Noel Azcona, baritone, choral conductor and UST Conservatory of Music faculty member.

A curious note regarding the composers of the competition pieces: The late maestro San Pedro, who hails from Angono, took his primary education at Pasig Elementary School and secondary education at Rizal High School.

Sanros, on the other hand, is a full-blooded Pasigueno.

Music, indeed, is a jewel of the city, and, thank goodness, the city government has actively supported the appreciation and dissemination of the musical arts through the holding of the yearly contest.

Exclusively a competition for the different sectors of the town then, it became metrowide in 2005, and has since grown in popularity.

The project was conceived by Soledad C. Eusebio, wife of former Mayor Vicente P. Eusebio (she herself would eventually become mayor). Her son, incumbent Mayor Robert C. Eusebio, and the city council have continued the legacy.



PASIG City Concert Choir

Adeste Fidelis, a classical music treat

THIS YEAR'S Yuletide season was ushered by Adeste Fideles 2007 at the Plenary Hall of the Philippine International Convention Center.

The company of classical artists consisted of sopranos Rachelle Gerodias, Karla Gutierrez, Elaine Lee and Jennifer Uy; tenors Nelyn Cabahug, Abdul Candao, Randy Gilongo, Sherwin Sozon and George Yang.

Josefmo Chino Toledo conducted the Metro Manila Community Orchestra.

Also performing were the Philippine Madrigal Singers and Chiang Kai Shek College Youth Choir under conductress Irma Tan Si.

The tone was set when tenor Cabahug sang Our Lord's Prayer as the invocation.

The orchestra opened up with a robust overture of "Hark The Herald Angels Sing" which was especially arranged for Adeste Fideles.

Among the selected music in the program were "Adeste Fideles" ("O Come All Ye Faithful"); the solemn "Panis Angelicum" (Bread of Angels), the favorite Communion song during Catholic Mass; Schubert's "Ave Maria," "Angels from the Realm of Glory," "O Holy Night," "Silent Night," "What Child Is This?"

Particularly well-received was "Light of a Million Mornings," rendered solo by Gerodias.

Pop singer Vina Morales sang the Filipino Christmas standards with tenors Cabahug, Sozon, and Candao, who was flown in from his base in Vienna.

The full-company rendition



PRODUCER
Eduardo H. Yap

of "Joy to the World," Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus" and the encore, "Ang Pasko Ay Sumapit," roused the audience to its feet.

The concert was presented by the Management Association of the Philippines headed by its president, Albert del Rosario, former ambassador to the United States Co-presenter was Credit Suisse of HK.

The concert was produced by Eduardo H. Yap.



SOPRANO Rachelle Gerodias sings "Light of a Million Mornings."



LARA Maigne of Opera Belles



JACK Sakud, Juan Alberto Gaerlan and Sherwin Sozon

Music movers of 2007

From page D1

pianists Ingrid Sala Santamaria and Reynaldo Reyes.

For giving music competitions a new positive orientation and not making it a cut-throat, if not a traumatic affair, for young musicians, the Music Contests of the Year are the National Music Competitions for Young Artists under program director Montet Acoymo and the Piano Teachers Guild of the Competition Bach-Philamlife Competition under Fr. Manuel Maramba, OSB.

For excellent programming and the unanimous acclaim from both critics and audiences, the Pianists of the Year are all Russians: Sergey Kuznetsov and Ilya Rashkevskiy, who were recently heard at Philamlife Theater.

Opera treat

The opera treat for January next year is Johann Strauss II's "Die Fledermaus," presented by the UST Conservatory of Music and Cultural Center of the Philippines.

It will feature the country's opera treasures such as Rachelle Gerodias, Andrew Fernando, Noel Azcona and other Thomasian performing artists.

The evening performances at 8 p.m. will be on Jan. 18-19 and 25-26; while

3 p.m. matinees will be on Jan. 19 and 26. Call 7314022.

Licad comeback

Cecile Licad returns to the CCP March 28 with two concertos: Beethoven No. 2 and Tchaikovsky's First.

The concert is presented by the Buencamino Foundation and CCP on the occasion of the 125th birth anniversary of Filipino composer Francisco Buencamino, great granduncle of Licad.

The concert will also mark Licad's 40th anniversary of her orchestra debut at age 7.

After her CCP engagement, Licad will do an outreach tour with the Pundakit group of Coke Bolipata and the Philippine Youth Symphonic Band first week of April.

Debut recital

US-based pianist Emily Yap Chua had her debut recital at the CCP Little Theater yesterday. Her concert, "An Afternoon of French Piano Music," featured selected works by Debussy, Chaminade and Chopin.

Chua is a graduate of Florida State University. She earned her Master of Music and Doctor of Musical Arts degrees at the Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music.



CONDUCTOR Helen Quach (second from left) with well-wishers during her Manila concert

Operatic New Year's Eve

HYATT HOTEL AND CASINO MANILA USHERS IN 2008 WITH the New Year's Eve performance from the Philippine Opera Company.

Hold on to your seat as the Three Waiters jump out and surprise the audience with their operatic performances.

Be awed by the dashing good looks of the Three Tenors, who effortlessly sing light classics, popular standards, Broadway songs and everything else in between.

Enjoy the lovely and youthful ladies of the Opera Belles. Also to perform are the Brass Monkeys and DJs from SoundsGood Music.

Floyd Quintos is musical director. Call 2451234.



JENNIFER Uy, Eiber Esquivel and Ana Guillentelo

FAME Flores of Opera Belles



EMERALD Headway (EH) vice president Cristy Aspiras, Socorro Ramos of National Book Store, Navis Capital director David Ireland and EH president Miriam Balingit.

Books-and-mags distributor marks 20th year

EMERALD HEADWAY DISTRIBUTORS Inc., a magazine and book distribution company, celebrated recently its 20th anniversary at Hotel InterContinental.

The firm was founded by Miriam Balingit and Cristy Aspiras. During the anniversary, the two owners gave special recognition to its top retailer-partners and loyal subscribers.

Emerald Headway started in 1987, with the Star magazine. It now provides the Filipino reader with over a thousand international magazine and book titles.

Today, Emerald Headway has grown into a full-fledged multinational company, having established a partnership with Navis Capital Limited, an international investment group based in Malaysia.

New book on Bulacan heritage

A NEW BOOK FEATURING the contributions of Bulacan in the arts has been recently released.

Bulacan has more than her share of national heroes, great composers and poets, artists and writers, and cultural, historical and religious landmarks.

In this attractive, richly illustrated book, cultural author Amadis Ma. Guerrero takes the reader on an armchair tour of the province and reviews Bulacan's prominent personalities in the arts. It focuses on

the achievements, past and present, in architecture, visual arts, literature, music, dance, theater and crafts.

Produced by the Provincial Youth, Sports, Employment, Arts and Culture Office (Pyseaco) of Bulacan, and editorial supervision, design and print production by Tactical Mix, "Bulacafiana" is the next best thing to an actual educational tour of the province.

Available at Pyseaco, Provincial Capitol, Malolos, Bulacan; call (044) 7916604, 6874920, 0917-8822364.

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Well-appreciated 'Nutcracker'

The Philippine Ballet Theater's recent production kept both youngsters and adults entertained to the hilt

By Elka Krystle R. Requinta
Contributor

THE NUTCRACKER HAS come a long way from the ho-hum sideshow that it was when it first played at Russia's Maryinsky Theater in 1892, under famed choreographer Marius Petipa.

Based on revisions by well-known French author Alexander Dumas from a book by E.T.A. Hoffman, the story has since undergone several versions to become the overtly popular Christmas staple that it is today.

But the plot, like Pyotr Ilich Tchaikovsky's delightful music, remains untouched: Young German girl is given a toy nutcracker who saves her from giant mice, then transforms into a prince as they journey to an enchanted land where their bravery is celebrated through a showcase of dances.

"The Nutcracker's" ability to "captivate both the young and young at heart" came true once again with Philippine Ballet Theater's recent production.

Using the Michael Chernov and Gelsey Kirkland adaptation for its show at the Cultural Center of the Philippines Main Theater, the company's stellar cast kept both youngsters and adults entertained to the hilt.

In awe

The audience gaped in awe at the adeptness of the dancers in fantasy characters. Especially lauded were Katherine Torfeo's expressive Marie Stahlbaum, Faye Abigail Tan's passionate Sugar Plum Fairy, and Jared Jehowil Tan's valiant Nutcracker Prince.

Torfeo, in a ruffled white nightgown, looked as if she was barely in her teens. Displaying light and nimble footwork, PBT's resident guest artist executed a round of fouettés and pirouettes that were soft but safe at one point, but her grand jets near the finale were powerful and jaw-dropping.

Meanwhile, the company's principal danseuse, Tan, was clearly the doyenne of the fairies in movements as passionately expressive as her face. Her willful arabesques, clean chaînés and long lines earned raves as well as her dainty solo during one of the well-loved divertissements.

It was heart-warming to watch Tan's younger brother, Jared, portray the role of the prince who gracefully supported Tan in fish dives and lifts, as well as in her finger pirouettes during the romantic pas de deux.



FAYE Tan and Jared Tan, with Flower Fairy; below, Anatoly Panasyukov as Drosselmeier and Katherine Torfeo as Marie



Greek god), which were all in timeless, old-fashioned costumes that added to the charm of the show.

The national dances from Spain, Arabia, Russia and China also alluded to holiday treats, with Nikka Aquino and Jan Parangal's Chinese ribbon-and-fan divertissement as another crowd favorite.

Imperfect

This "Nutcracker," though, is not perfect. The minimalist setting in some scenes (merely an abstract profusion of lights) didn't live up to the traditional grandeur of the story. And the intercultural painting, which depicted some famous structures where the national dances came from, were lost on young audiences who were looking for a more literal view of the fantasy pace.

And the corps de ballet wore dismally blank expressions on their faces and were sorely lacking in precision as the Snowflakes and the Flowers, in what were supposed to serve as clinchers to some of the production's dream sequences.

Nevertheless, the corps looked tall, poised and immaculate in their calf-length tutus with drooped sleeves and low backlines.

And the resounding bravos at the end of the generally appreciated production were undoubtedly still well-deserved.

PBT opens its 22nd season next year with "Heritage" on May 16-18; followed by "Darangan at Bantugan" on Sept. 26-28, and "La Fille Mal Gardée" on Nov. 28-30.

E-mail the author at elkarequinta@gmail.com

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Children wearing TESLAR in a recent pilot study showed improved concentration!

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The TESLAR Effect may "help compensate for some of the negative impact of using a cell phone"

In June 2002 Alternative Medicine Magazine conducted independent product testing which demonstrated that TESLAR may have a positive effect on the human body in the presence of a cell phone. This test measured Heart Rate Variability (HRV), which can be a good measurement of a body's overall response to external stress. This product test concluded that the use of TESLAR may in fact compensate for some of the negative impact of using a cell phone.

While wearing TESLAR, results suggest a "stabilizing effect" on or even "beneficial stimulation" of nervous system activity.

In 2003 Dr. Nyron Eccles, MD, saw similar results on patients. Dr. Eccles' HRV tests showed that without TESLAR the nervous system can become stressed when exposed to an energized cellphone. While wearing TESLAR, results suggest a "stabilizing effect" on or even "beneficial stimulation" of nervous system activity.

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In 2005, a Heart Rate Variability study (i.e. Stress Test) published in Exercise Magazine suggests TESLAR wearers may experience a more balanced Autonomic Nervous System related to cardiovascular fitness. Measurements suggest after wearing TESLAR, test subjects experienced improved general cardiovascular fitness related to (1) relaxing the "fight or flight" response; (2) increasing "relaxation response"; and (3) improving adaptability to external stress.



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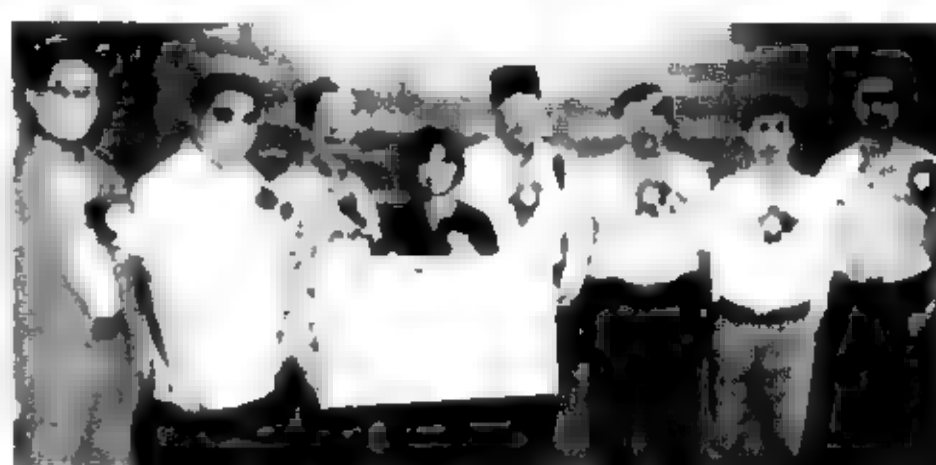
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MIKE CORROZA with spouse and well-wishers



CORROZA with other SEA Write laureates

SEA Write Award for Michael Corroza

By Gary Deviles
Contributor

POET-IN-FILIPINO MICHAEL Corroza is this year's Philippine recipient of the Southeast Asian Write Award, given out for regional writers by the Kingdom of Thailand.

During the awarding ceremony, Corroza serenaded the guests with a poem he made only for that evening. This year's awarding ceremony was held at the Orienta Hotel in Bangkok, with H.H. Prince Prem Purachatra

gracing the event.

Corroza has received major awards from the Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards for Literature; Talaang Ginto sa Tulang Gantimpala Collantes; and Home Life Magazine National Poetry Contest.

His books, "Dili't Dili" and "Mga Lagot na Liwanag" were finalists in the National Book Award for Poetry.

Corroza has also widely performed the Balagtas locally and in Singapore and Hawaii. He recently represented the

Philippines in the 10th Kuala Lumpur International Poetry Reading.

As a staunch advocate of Filipinoization, Corroza also hosts "Harana ng Puso," a weekly radio show over 104.3 FM that features traditional and classic Filipino songs and poems. The show features the Mabuhay Singers.

Two years ago, the Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino bestowed upon Corroza a national award of recognition for his contribution to the development and promotion of the Filipino lan-

guage and literature.

In interviews and lectures, Corroza bemoans the fact that the Filipino language is always seen as the culprit for English language education of Filipinos and that somehow the proliferation of Filipino in various media is a symptom of this problem.

Such narrow-sightedness for Corroza is the very symptom of our problem in education and not in language acquisition whether in Filipino or English.

Corroza further believes it is the duty of scholars to translate

works from its original language (and not only the ones translated already in English) to Filipino for a true revolutionary education of people to be realized.

Corroza is a member of the Filipino Department of Ateneo de Manila University. He lectures at the Graduate School of the University of Santo Tomas (UST). He finished AB Philosophy at the UST Faculty of Arts and Letters and was a writer-editor of the Varsitarian, the official student organ of UST, during his college days.

PRIDE OF PLACE
Augusto Villalon

25 years of Café Ysabel

MY FAMILY WENT TO CAFÉ Ysabel, the other week to celebrate its 25th anniversary. We had been invited to a special dinner prepared and orchestrated by superchef Gene Gonzales, his son Gino, and their students from the Center for Culinary Studies.

Twenty-five years ago, Café Ysabel started out in a former fruit store on Lonely Wilson Street in suburban San Juan, the first restaurant to open in what has now become one of Manila's premier restaurant streets.

We lived a short block away, practically the café's only neighbors, separated by empty fields of grass.

My family had just about moved into Café Ysabel, where we went very often and were totally at ease, certainly well fed with our menu favorites and, often enough, surprised with new offerings destined for future menus.

Today's Café Ysabel is the restaurant in a pre-World War II house standing on a San Juan hill, one of the best surviving examples of the old green-and-white San Juan-style "bahay bakasyunan" (vacation home) built when the busy area was a weekend retreat for Manilaños escaping the heat of the city.

Latticed verandas wrapped around the two-story wooden houses that were designed to maximize the crisp San Juan

air. Although Café Ysabel's second-story verandas have been glassed-in and air-conditioned, the old San Juan feel is still there.

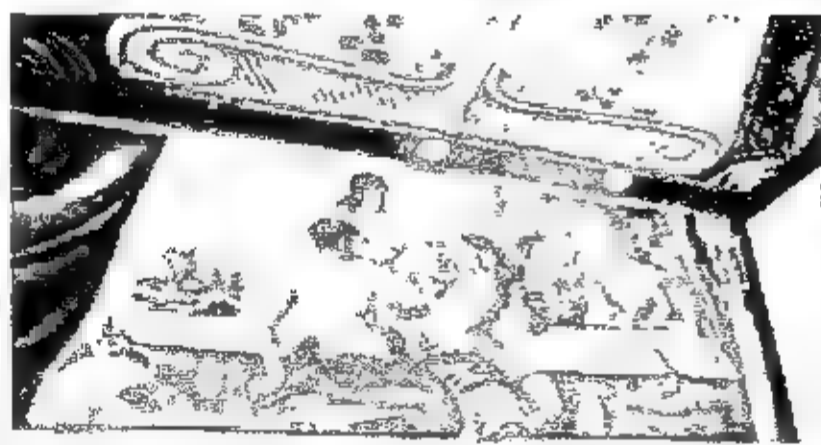
The menu, a journey recalling all of Gene's restaurants past and present, deserves to be published.

Notable menus

Lasap: Amuse Guille, Mango and Squid Pannacotta, Alamang Wafers.

Trattoria di Gino: Mele al Forno with Foie Gras, Mixed Greens, Candied Walnut, Fine Tarte Croustillante, Cricova Muscat.

Café Ysabel: Crustacean



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THE AMBIANCE is
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Three Ways (Jelly / Bisque / Chawan Mushi).

Gino's: Roasted Seabass in Sautéed Ferns, Breton Whisked Butter, Monkey Bay Sauvignon Blanc 2006.

Café Ysabel: Osmanthus and Sour Peach Sorbet.

Gene's Bistro: Smoked Hanger Steak with Sweet Breads and Ham, Stuffed Mushrooms, Truffle Demi, Potato Dauphinoise, Torres Mas La Plana 2002.

The Smiling Chef: Strawberry Shortcake, Balsamic Ice Cream on Brandy Snaps, Ginger Caramel Sauce, Balsamic Glaze, Torres Moscatel d'Oro, Rose Petal Pralines.

Coffee or Tea.

Neighborhood presence

Gene's menu surpassed many of his own menus we enjoyed in the past quarter of a century. Café Ysabel has happily been our neighborhood bistro. It still is.

Although we now live on the opposite side of town, within walking distance to many of the most fashionable restaurants of the moment, we still go back to Ysabel from time to time simply because body and soul feel so good to be there.

May 2008 find you always in places where your body and soul feel good.

E-mail the author at prideplace@gmail.com

Author answers issues on the 'Aranetas'

By Maria Lina Araneta Santiago
Contributor

DEAR FR. MIGUEL BERNAD,

Thank you very much for your book review ("The Aranetas in Philippine History," Lifestyle INQUIRER, Dec. 10). I am really very pleased that people are reading not only about my having written a book on my family but the story of my family.

It is heartwarming to know that I have contributed to a better understanding of our country's history, which is also what a young writer, Ed Bado, wrote in his article in the Manila Standard, "Through the Eyes of an Araneta."

He writes, "The more we read the book and the more pictures we see, the better understanding and appreciation for Filipinos we gain."

If you do not mind, I would like to disagree with you that I did not mention all the children of Gregorio, and that their husbands were not mentioned. Please take a look at p. 65.

I did a head count several times to make sure the 14 children were included in Chapter 3 (kindly see p. 67 yearly additions). I took another head count today to see if all the wives or husbands were mentioned and they were.

The wedding photos of everyone who got married are also included in the book. If you could also take a look at pages 101 and 102, you will find all the photos of all the children of Don Gregorio.

As the other art collection of my Tito Luis, the donation of the antiques of T. Luis is mentioned on 78. When the exhibit was first opened, it featured his antiques, not his paintings.

However, you are right in the family of Salvador. The four children born before the war were mentioned in "Life in Victoriana," while Regina's birth was mentioned postwar.

The pictures of all the sons-in-law of Salvador are in the book except the husband of Regina. By that time, when they were in Vancouver, there were no more

family photos that had everyone together.

On the debate—I did not seem to read about the intervention of Father Ortiz in the Magsaysay biography written by Abueva, though it might have been an oversight. I just wrote to Ding Lichauco to ask him to fill me in on this matter, as I always had the impression my father was a consistent advocate for industrialization.

Were there two big debates when my father was agriculture secretary? What I wrote about was the Araneta Plan versus the Rodriguez Plan. When Dad advocated the New Deal formula for Mindanao and the relocation of families there, that, indeed, was agricultural development but at the same time he called for the establishment of basic industries and giving incentives to private investors. (Kindly refer to pp. 370 and 371).

As to his obras pias, well, you are again right. We never asked Dad why he

wanted a foundation. But for the right to keep the Blessed Sacrament, that I missed in explaining when I wrote about the Pious House.

The chapel, the dorm were all classified under the so-called Pious House. Hence we were not allowed to dance rock-and-roll and things like that.

I missed the reason for the Pious House classification. He did mention many times that he could live forever through his school.

There are many things I would have loved to ask my father and mother. Many times when writing this book, when I could not find what I wanted to write about, like the reference materials I knew I had, I would

pray and ask them, Mom and Dad. What do you want me to write about? I would find new things which were better.



ENTERTAINMENT

Editor Emmie G. Velarde

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Website: www.inquirer.net/entertainment



Buboy blames 'detractors'

CESAR "BUBOY" MONTANO HAS ONE thing to say to "those trying to destroy my family," and it's not nice: "May katarusan din kayo."

There was no way it could have escaped public notice that his wife Sunshine had recently—on Christmas Day,

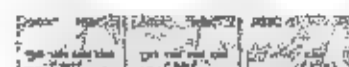
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Gov't pledges more support for film industry

FDCP also calls on producers to take advantage of available funds

By Marinel R. Cruz

TURNING THE PHILIPPINES INTO a hub for foreign film production in Asia is the major thrust of the Film Development Council of the Philippines in 2008, its chair

Atienza said. "The easiest way to effectively export our services is to get the producers to come here," Atienza told INQUIRER Entertainment.

B'wood, Singapore

Three of eight Bollywood film producers who recently visited the country have promised to make movies here next year. The producers came to check out the Philippines as an alternative site for Bollywood films.

"We are also hoping to develop joint ventures with Singapore," the FDCP chief said. "They have the technology, we have the creativity and the stars."

In November, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye represented the country in the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the Philippines and Singapore. The signing coincided with the Asia Film Market and Conference, also in Singapore.

Calling producers

Atienza said the council will be more "aggressive" in investing in films—as co-producer—in 2008. He said only a few producers have come forward to make use of the P25-million Film Fund, which has been in existence since 2006.

Films co-produced by the FDCP are Eddie Romero's "Faces of Love," Adolf Alix Jr.'s "Donsol," Pablo Biglang-awa Jr. and Veronica Velasco's "Inang Yaya" and Soxy Topacio's "Reyna."

"We're hoping that more producers will use the fund. It's really for them. Plus, the fund has to revolve so we can help other filmmakers," said Atienza.

Festival subsidies

The FDCP will continue to grant subsidies to independent film producers who get invited to international film festivals, he added.

This year, an estimated P5 million were disbursed to finance the trips of films like Dante Mendoza's "Foster Child" and "Tirador," Jim Labraran's "Tribu," Lav Diaz's "Death of a Poet," Aureaus Sauto's "Pisay," Neil "Buboy" Tan's "Aran, for Rent" and Alix's "Kadin" to various film festivals across the globe.

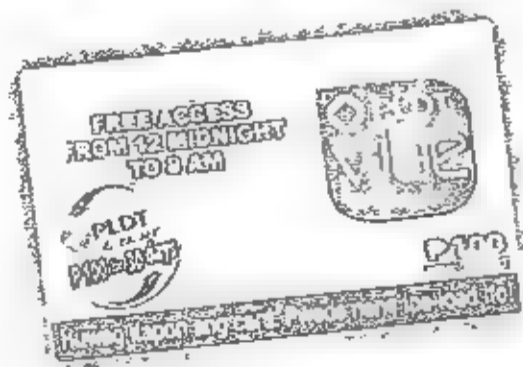
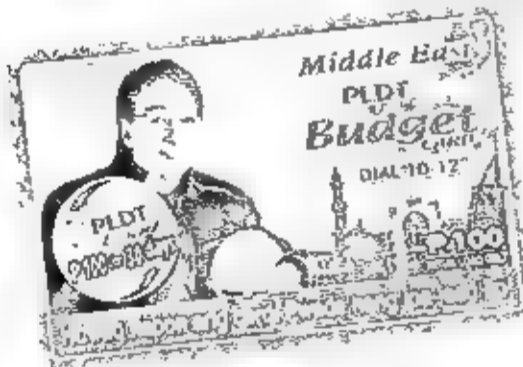
Atienza also said the FDCP will continue supporting locally produced film fests like the ongoing 2007 Metro Manila Film Festival. "This year, the FDCP was asked for festival raffle prizes," he ex-

GOV'T/E2

SHEILBERT
Magat of
"Tribu."

FDCP helped finance cast members' trip to a South Korean filmfest.

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GALLERIA

1 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO - THX 12:10 2:30 4:50 7:10	6 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9 11:00 1:45 4:30 7:15
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 4 10:20 12:40 3:00 7:40	7 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO 2:00 4:20 6:40
3 RESIKLO 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40	8 ENTENG KABISOTE 4 12:10 2:30 4:50 7:10
4 KATAS ng SAUDI 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40	9 BAHAY KUBO 11:40 2:15 4:50 7:25
5 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO 0:20 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40	10 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9 1:15 4:00 6:45

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For inquiries: Contact ThinkCreative at 0905-3357869 or email at thinkcreativeproductions@gmail.com

Admission: Regular Registration: 12,500.00php
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ERMITA

1 RESIKLO 12:50 3:10 5:30 7:50	6 BAHAY KUBO 12:50 3:10 5:30 7:50
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 4 11:20 1:55 4:30 6:55	7 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9 2:30 5:00 7:30
3 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO 12:50 3:10 5:30 7:50	1 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9 10:50 1:20 3:50 6:20
4 KATAS ng SAUDI 1:00 3:15 5:30 7:45	2 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO 11:20 1:40 4:00 6:20
5 ENTENG KABISOTE 4 1:15 3:50 6:25	3 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO 2:25 4:45 7:05

METRO EAST

1 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9 11:00 1:30 4:00 6:30	5 ENTENG KABISOTE 4 1:00 1:30 4:00 6:30
2 BAHAY KUBO 11:00 1:30 4:00 6:30	6 KATAS ng SAUDI 11:20 1:40 4:00 6:30
3 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO 11:15 1:40 4:05 6:30	7 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO 1:00 1:25 3:50 5:55
4 RESIKLO 11:05 1:35 4:05 6:35	8 ENTENG KABISOTE 4 1:30 4:00 6:30

THE

1 RESIKLO	5 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 4	6 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
3 BAHAY KUBO	7 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9
4 KATAS ng SAUDI	8 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO

PIONEER

1 RESIKLO	3 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9
2 BAHAY KUBO	4 KATAS ng SAUDI

STA. ROSA

1 RESIKLO	1 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
2 BAHAY KUBO	2 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO
3 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO	3 BAHAY KUBO
4 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9	4 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9
5 ENTENG KABISOTE 4	5 RESIKLO

DASMARINAS

1 RESIKLO	1 RESIKLO
2 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO	2 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9
3 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9	3 BAHAY KUBO
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 4	4 KATAS ng SAUDI
5 BAHAY KUBO	5 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO
	6 ENTENG KABISOTE 4

ANGELES

1 RESIKLO	1 RESIKLO
2 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO	2 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
3 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9	3 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 4	

STARMILLS

1 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9	4 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO
2 BAHAY KUBO	5 RESIKLO
3 KATAS ng SAUDI	6 ENTENG KABISOTE 4

BACOLOD

1 BAHAY KUBO	1 RESIKLO
2 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO	2 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9
3 RESIKLO	3 BAHAY KUBO
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 4	4 KATAS ng SAUDI
5 KATAS ng SAUDI	5 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO
6 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9	6 ENTENG KABISOTE 4

LOLOLO

1 BAHAY KUBO	1 RESIKLO
2 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO	2 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9
3 RESIKLO	3 BAHAY KUBO
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 4	4 KATAS ng SAUDI
5 KATAS ng SAUDI	5 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO
6 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9	6 ENTENG KABISOTE 4

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1 BAHAY KUBO 1:05 3:50 6:35	3 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO 12:05 2:30 4:55
2 SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL 9 12:30 3:30 6:30	4 ENTENG KABISOTE 4 11:50 2:15 4:40
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BAHAY KUBO G 11:50, 2:30, 5:10	SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO PG13 12:50, 3:10, 5:30	SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO PG13 11:00, 1:10, 3:30, 5:50

MOVIE & SCHEDULES SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

RESIKLO G 1:00, 3:20, 5:40	ENTENG KABISOTE 4 G 12:50, 3:10, 5:30	SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL 9 G 11:40, 2:20, 5:00
BAHAY KUBO G 11:50, 2:30, 5:10	SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO PG13 12:50, 3:10, 5:30	SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO PG13 11:00, 1:10, 3:30, 5:50

M.M.T.A MOVIE GUIDE

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- 2 KATAS NG SAHON
- 3 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO
- 4 ENTENG KABISOTE - 4
- 5 PREMIERE
- 6 RESERVED

Blue Wave

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- 1 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL - 9
- 2 BAHAY KUBO
- 3 ENTENG KABISOTE - 4
- 4 RESIKLO

Eastwood Cinemas

Eastwood Cinemas (Manila) Tel. 733.4229

- 1 BAHAY KUBO
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- 3 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO
- 4 ENTENG KABISOTE - 4
- 5 RESIKLO

Paramall

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- 1 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL - 9
- 2 RESIKLO

Regal

Regal (Manila) Tel. 533.3851 333.3854

- 1 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO
- 2 BAHAY KUBO
- 3 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL - 9
- 4 KATAS NG SAHON

Star Cinema

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- 1 BAHAY KUBO
- 2 KATAS NG SAHON
- 3 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO
- 4 ENTENG KABISOTE - 4

Uptown

Uptown (Manila) Tel. 043 981.0790

- 1 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL - 9
- 2 RESIKLO

Waterside Cinemas

Waterside Cinemas (Baguio) Tel. 0741 444.3946

- 1 ENTENG KABISOTE - 4
- 2 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL - 9

Waterside Cinemas

Waterside Cinemas (Batangas) Tel. 0467 237 7007

- 1 ENTENG KABISOTE - 4
- 2 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL - 9

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- 1 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL - 9
- 2 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO
- 3 ENTENG KABISOTE - 4
- 4 RESIKLO

Star Cinema

Star Cinema (Manila) Tel. 531.2222/533.7951 loc. 171

- 1 RESIKLO
- 2 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO
- 3 ENTENG KABISOTE - 4
- 4 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL - 9
- 5 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO
- 6 BAHAY KUBO
- 7 RESIKLO
- 8 ENTENG KABISOTE - 4
- 9 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL - 9
- 10 KATAS NG SAHON

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- 1 RESIKLO
- 2 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO
- 3 ENTENG KABISOTE - 4
- 4 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL - 9
- 5 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO
- 6 BAHAY KUBO
- 7 RESIKLO
- 8 ENTENG KABISOTE - 4
- 9 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL - 9
- 10 KATAS NG SAHON

Star Cinema

Star Cinema (Manila) Tel. 531.2222/533.7951 loc. 171

- 1 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL - 9
- 2 RESIKLO

Star Cinema

Star Cinema (Manila) Tel. 531.2222/533.7951 loc. 171

- 1 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO
- 2 BAHAY KUBO
- 3 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL - 9
- 4 KATAS NG SAHON

Star Cinema

Star Cinema (Manila) Tel. 531.2222/533.7951 loc. 171

- 1 BAHAY KUBO
- 2 KATAS NG SAHON
- 3 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO
- 4 ENTENG KABISOTE - 4

Star Cinema

Star Cinema (Manila) Tel. 531.2222/533.7951 loc. 171

- 1 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL - 9
- 2 RESIKLO

Star Cinema

Star Cinema (Manila) Tel. 531.2222/533.7951 loc. 171

- 1 ENTENG KABISOTE - 4
- 2 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL - 9

Star Cinema

THEATRES

Theatres of the New Millennium

Cinema 2000 Watermark (Manila) Tel. 815.4214/16

- 1 RESIKLO
- 2 ENTENG KABISOTE - 4
- 3 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO
- 4 KATAS NG SAHON

Cinema 2000 Watermark (Manila) Tel. 0451 547.7383

- 1 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO
- 2 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL - 9
- 3 ENTENG KABISOTE - 4
- 4 Cinema 2000 Watermark (Manila) Tel. 0444 785.3329

Cinema 2000 Watermark (Manila) Tel. 0444 785.3329

- 1 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL - 9
- 2 ENTENG KABISOTE - 4
- 3 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO
- 4 Cinema 2000 Watermark (Manila) Tel. 0444 785.3329

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- 1 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL - 9
- 2 ENTENG KABISOTE - 4
- 3 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO
- 4 Cinema 2000 Watermark (Manila) Tel. 0444 785.3329

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- 1 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO
- 2 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL - 9
- 3 RESIKLO
- 4 ENTENG KABISOTE - 4

Cinema 2000 Watermark (Manila) Tel. 0444 785.3329

- 1 ENTENG KABISOTE - 4
- 2 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO
- 3 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL - 9
- 4 RESIKLO

Cinema 2000 Watermark (Manila) Tel. 0444 785.3329

- 1 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO
- 2 ENTENG KABISOTE - 4
- 3 RESIKLO
- 4 ENTENG KABISOTE - 4

Cinema 2000 Watermark (Manila) Tel. 0444 785.3329

- 1 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO
- 2 ENTENG KABISOTE - 4
- 3 RESIKLO
- 4 ENTENG KABISOTE - 4

Cinema 2000 Watermark (Manila) Tel. 0444 785.3329

- 1 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL - 9
- 2 BAHAY KUBO
- 3 KATAS NG SAHON
- 4 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO

Cinema 2000 Watermark (Manila) Tel. 0444 785.3329

- 1 ENTENG KABISOTE - 4
- 2 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL - 9
- 3 RESIKLO
- 4 ENTENG KABISOTE - 4



CHILD actors in "Kadin," a recipient of FDCP assistance this year.

Gov't agency...

From page E1

planned." The FDCP likewise assisted this year's Cinema.aya Philippine Independent Film Festival and Cinemania International Film Festival. "Next year, we'll be a little more involved in the animation

industry," Atienza said. "We have a competitive edge there." Atienza added that some 80 to 85 percent of films that applied for amusement tax rebates from the Cinema Evaluation Board (CEB) were graded. Not all films are deemed eligi-

ble for grading. An "A" grade entitles a movie to a 100-percent tax rebate; a "B" fetches a 65-percent rebate. "This is reflective of the fact that Filipino films are improv-

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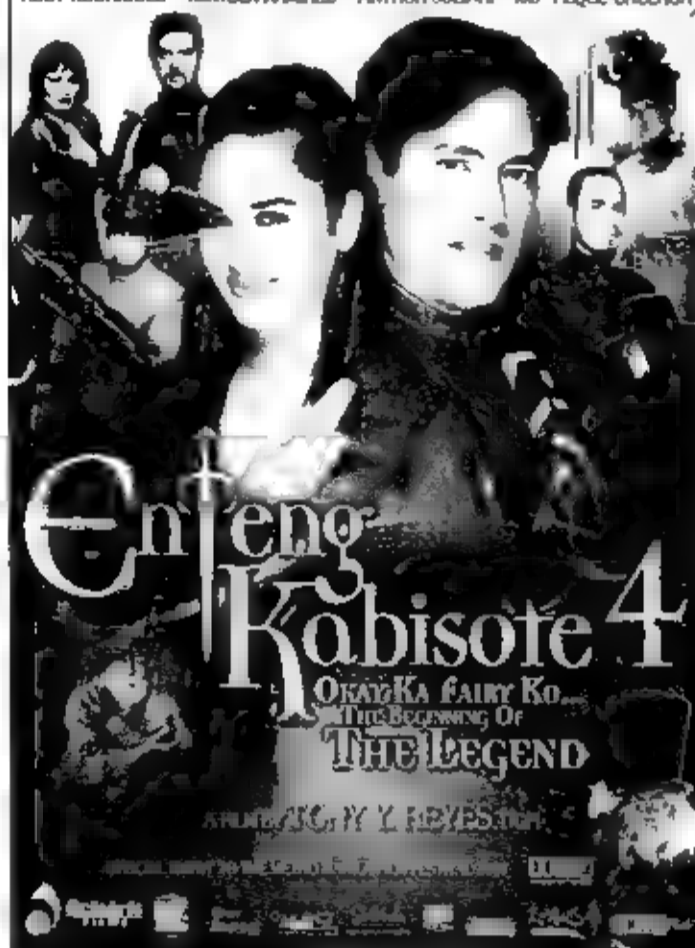
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6:00 PM The Monkees	7:15 PM The Monkees	8:30 PM Richard Marx	10:00 PM LALA New Year's Countdown	11:00 PM The Monkees	12:00 AM New Year's Countdown
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EASTWOOD CINEMAS
DIGITAL
SOUND

SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 9 1 50, 4 50, 7 50 G	SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO 12 10, 2 50, 5 30, 8 10 PG 13	ENTENG KABISOTE 4 12 55, 3 20, 5 45, 8 0 G	RESIKLO 2 05, 4 35, 7 05 G
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GLORIETTA 4	1 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 9	2 ENTENG KABISOTE 4	3 ENTENG KABISOTE 4 GUARANTEED SEATS
GREENBELT 1	1 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO	2 ENTENG KABISOTE 4	
GREENBELT 3	1 ENTENG KABISOTE 4 GUARANTEED SEATS	2 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO GUARANTEED SEATS	
ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO	2 ENTENG KABISOTE 4	
AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO	2 BAHAY KUBO	3 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 9
MARKET! MARKET!	1 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO	2 BAHAY KUBO	3 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 9
TRI NOMA	1 RESIKLO	2 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO	3 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO GUARANTEED SEATS
	5 BAHAY KUBO	6 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 9	7 ENTENG KABISOTE 4 GUARANTEED SEATS

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<p>GLORIETTA Glorietta - 752 7272 Greenbelt - 757 4853 to 54</p> <p>FREE Christmas Gift Bag for every P300 worth of purchase. See leaflets for details. Per DTI-NCR Permit No. A2-456, Series of 2007 November 15 to December 31, 2007</p>	<p>GREENBELT Christmas Gift Box Promo Get a FREE gift box for a minimum purchase of P3,000 at any Greenbelt establishment. Per DTI-NCR Permit No. A2-490, Series of 2007 December 1 to 31</p>
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<p>MARKET! MARKET! FREE Christmas Gift Bag for every P500 worth of purchase See leaflets for details. Per DTI-NCR Permit No. A2-506 Series of 2007 December 1 to 31</p>	<p>AYALA MUSEUM WATER: THE MUSEUM by Juvenal Serano November 24 to January 13, 2008; Ground Floor Gallery For more info, pls. call 767-7117 to 21 loc. 14 or email museum_inquiry@ayalamuseum.org</p>
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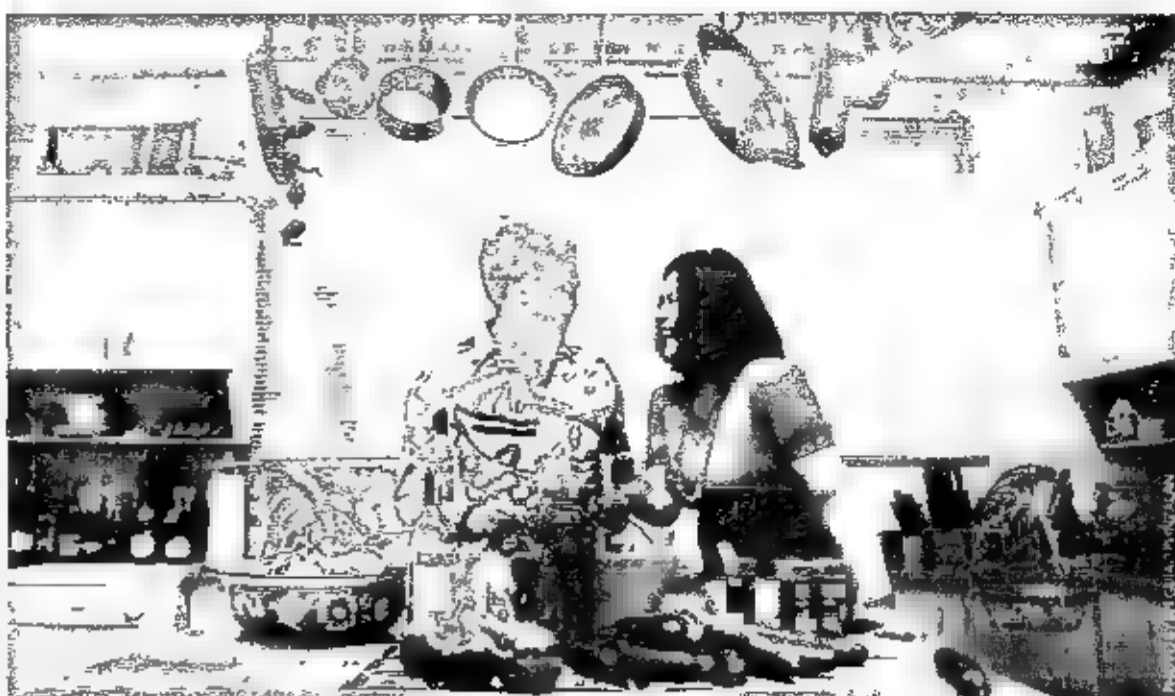
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FUN SNAPS FROM 2007



TWO FACES OF BLISS

Ali Sotto and her diplomat-husband Omar Bsaies' cross-cultural marriage extends to the kitchen. "We cook together," they told us in March. Now, this fun couple is bound for Madrid, his next post. Meanwhile, quite by chance (below), INQUIRER Entertainment bumped into Donita Rose and son PJ in a Tagaytay resort, where the working mom was taping a TV show in May. It took little coaxing for the tot to ham it up for Marinel Cruz's camera.

GREENHILLS CINEMAS

THEATRE MALL

A hand-picked assortment

1 RESIKLO 10:30 12:50 3:00 5:30 7:50 GP

2 BANAY KUBO 1:40 2:25 5:10 7:55 GP

PROMENADE

A hand-picked assortment

3 SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL 11:20 2:10 5:00 7:50 GP

4 ENTENG KAMISOTE 10:30 12:50 3:10 5:30 7:50 GP

5 SAKAL SAKAL SAKOLO 1:00 1:40 4:20 7:00 PG-13

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MUSIC MUSEUM

January 24, 2008
at 8:30 PM
February 1, 2008
February 3 & 4, 2008

Donna & the Shamrock
Sgt. Rev. Vire
Kyle & Shamrock Cueshe & Moya
Jose M. Juan

8:00 PM
8:00 PM
8:00 PM
9:00 PM

PROMENADE

January 17, 2008
February 4, 2008
February 15 & 16, 2008

Angelo
Lance Raymond
Genel Santos

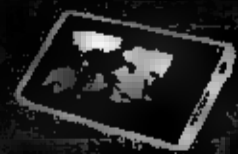
8:00 PM
8:00 PM
8:00 PM

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P2

3GB
Touchscreen UI
MPEG4/WMV/MP3/JPG
Drag & Drop
DNSE 2.0
Bluetooth Capable



S5

1GB/2GB
Key LED Touchpad
MPEG4/WMV/MP3/JPG
Drag & Drop
DNSE 2.0
Bluetooth Capable



T10

2GB/4GB
Built-in Speaker
MPEG4/WMV/MP3/JPG
Drag & Drop
DNSE 2.0
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'Shrek The Third'

ONCE UPON A time, an ogre lived in an enchanted castle.

The story continues as Magnavision Home Video presents "Shrek The Third" on VCD and DVD.

When Shrek married Fiona, the last thing he wanted was to rule Far Far Away. But when his frog-in-law, King Harold, suddenly croaks, Shrek is fired for the crown.

Lending their voices to the animated film are Mike Myers (Shrek), Eddie Murphy (Donkey), Antonio Banderas (Puss in Boots) and Cameron Diaz (Princess Fiona).

(Jason Statham vows to find the elusive killer and avenge his partner's death.

But Rogue proves untraceable until three years later when he resurfaces to ignite a bloody turf war between Chinese mob leader Chang (John Lone) and Japanese Yakuza boss Shiro (Ryo Ishibashi). Also starring Devon Aoki and Luis Guzman.

'Surf's Up'

Teenage Rockhopper penguin Cody Maverick, up-and-coming surfer, enters his first competition.

Cody believes winning will bring him the admiration and respect he desires until he comes face-to-face with a washed-up old surfer named Geek and discovers what a true winner really is.

'1408'

Renowned horror novelist Mike Enslin (John Cusack) believes only in what he sees with his eyes.

But things change when he checks into suite 1408 of the notorious Dolphin Hotel for his latest project.

Defying the warnings of hotel manager Olin (Samuel L. Jackson), the author becomes the first to occupy what is known to be a haunted room.

"1408," a Stephen King adaptation, is directed by Swedish writer-director Mikael Hafstrom.

'Rogue Assassin'

After his partner is brutally murdered by the infamous assassin Rogue (Jet Li), FBI agent Jack Crawford

'Beyonce Experience'

Sony BMG Music Entertainment has released "The Beyonce

DVD, which captures the music and thrills of the singer's 2007 world concert tour.

ENTERTAINMENT

Text us your feedback: inquirer.ent.name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)



Expecting, now engaged

LOS ANGELES—ACTRESS Jessica Alba, 26, has gotten engaged to her boyfriend, producer Cash Warren. Alba had announced earlier

this month that she is pregnant. "I can confirm that they are engaged," Alba's publicist, Brad Caffarelli told The Associated Press Thursday. AP



Christmas Hologram Tumblers

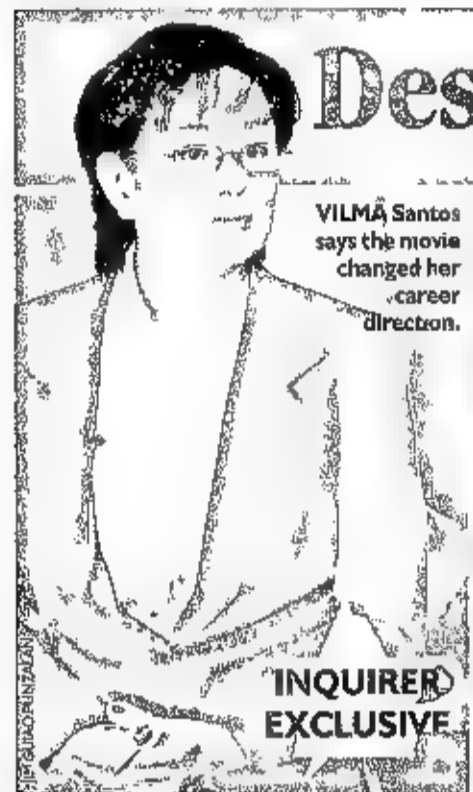
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Promo runs until December 31, 2007. See posters for details. © 2007 DD IP Holder LLC. All rights reserved.

Per Dunkin' Donuts No. 4161, Sales of 2007



VILMA Santos says the movie changed her career direction.

INQUIRER EXCLUSIVE

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

HAILED BY SOME CRITICS AS A MODERN Filipino movie classic, "Burlesk Queen" is also something of a Holy Grail for film archivists.

According to urban legend, a copy of "Burlesk Queen" was irretrievably lost after a storage room in the Manila Film Center was flooded following heavy rains sometime in the 1980s.

Film archivist Teddy Co, however, told INQUIRER Entertainment that the last known copy of "Burlesk" had been damaged "in a film laboratory's warehouse, not at the MFC, but also because of a sudden downpour."

Pinoy film classic located in Germany

Co said, "Film archives have three known enemies: flood, fire and war. That's why we have recovered very few films from the 1930s and 1940s."

But Celso Ad. Castillo's "Burlesk Queen" is a fairly recent movie. It was the controversial landslide winner in the hotly contested 1977 Metro Manila Film Festival.

In a recent interview with INQUIRER Entertainment, Castillo corrected the impression that his film was "lost forever."

"I was told by [producer] Manny Nuqui that a copy was found in Germany," Castillo said. "And I heard that the current owner has a high asking price. Maybe he is aware of the film's importance."

Nuqui, president of the Philippine Motion Pictures Producers Association (PMPAA), confirmed that he had heard of an existing copy of "Burlesk" in Europe.

"Mowelfund was tasked to recover it years after its producer, Ian Film Productions, sold it abroad in the late 1970s," Nuqui related.

Nick Deocampo, Mowelfund director, informed INQUIRER Entertainment that "Burlesk Queen" is available on VCD. "But it's blurry," he said, "made from a Betamax copy."

He also said that Mowelfund had traced "negative and print copies" to the present owner, Manfred Diemeok, based in Frankfurt, Germany.

DESPERATELY/P3



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So when you drink a glass of Tropicana Gold 100% you're not just drinking juice, you're drinking nutrition from nature.

Tropicana
GOLD

100% Nutrition from Nature.



"FROM my pinoy image," says Santos, 51, "I dared become a more serious actress."

PHOTO COURTESY OF MANILA FILM CENTER

A diario novela by CARLO J. CAPARAS
To have to hold
Art: ARNEL A. AVETRIA



SA MGA U-
NANG SAN-
PAW PA LANG
NANG PAS-
KAWALA NI
JENNY, NAG-
HAHANAP NA
SI ARVIN...

BAKIT MO AKO INIWAN,
JENNY...? WALA AKONG
KASALANAN.

BUMALIK
KA... BUMALIK
KA, JENNY?

NAG-IBASA
DAAN SI
JENNY

BAKIT MO
NAGAWA IYON,
ARVIN?

SABI MO
NOON... KAPIT
LANG. HUYAG
BIBITIW. ARVIN...
AKALA KO MAHAL
NA MAHAL MO
AKO.

TO BE CONTINUED

A. LUPIN BY JESS ABRERA

DI KA BA MAG
SUSUOT NG NAY
BILOG SA PAS-
SALUBONG NG
BAGONG TAON?
DI KO NA
KELANGAN

BAKIT?
MERON
NA AKO, E!

ITONG MUKHA
KONG BILOG!

ANS?

PUGAD BABOY BY BPM, JUNIOR

NAALALA MO BA
NOONG MUNTIK KA
NANG MAMATAY
DAPAT NALANGHAP MO
ANG BAGSIK NG KILI-
KILE NG KAYIBIGAN
KONG BUMIBAY?

MOHOMON
I NOT
REMEMBER?

DOBLE-INGET
SYA NGAYON DAPAT
NALUSO ANG PANGSHO-
HOLDAP SA MGA
NAGPAPA FIVE
SIX.

BOSS,
TANGSA NA LANG
YUNG MARANGHAG
NA MAGTANGKANG
HUMOLDAP SA
KAYIBIGAN MO

BAKIT?

PAG-TINUTUKAN
MO BARIL YON E
KAILANSAN NYANG
ITAAS YUNG MGA
KAMAY NYA
AY, PETAH YUNG
HOLDAPER!

PETAH
CYA PAPA!

GARFIELD BY JIM DAVIS

FIVE... FOUR... THREE...
TWO... ONE...

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!

YOU WANT A
NEW YEAR'S KISS?

THAT'S
ANIMAL
ABUSE,
LADY.

BABY BLUES BY JERRY SCOTT

I THINK IT'S WEIRD BECAUSE
WE GET CHRISTMAS CARDS
AFTER CHRISTMAS.

THEY'RE ALL "HAPPY HOLIDAYS"
AND I'M ALL "HAPPY ALREADY!"
AND THEY'RE ALL "HO-HO-HO!"

AAUUGGGGH!
RIP! TEAR! SHRED!

I THINK IT'S
HEALTHY TO
EXPRESS MY
FEELINGS

IT'LL BE HEALTHIER
IF YOU GO GET
A BROOM

ATOMO AND WEBOY BY LYRA GARCELLANO

IT'S THE LAST DAY
OF THE YEAR,
AtoMo

Let's take this
moment to
look back

THAT WAS
FUN.

LOVEKNOTS BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO

CARLE, MELANIE, NEW YEAR NA
BUKAS... SIMULA NA BUKAS NG
NEW LIFE, NEW ME, NEW YOU...

MEANING...

NGAYIN ANG HULING
ARAW NG OLD ME,
OLD YOU... AT HULING
ARAW DIN NA...

KAKIN TRY NG
SIN FOOD? KATA...

ATTAACK!

KIKO MACHINE BY MANIX ABRERA

O, MGA MANA-
MAHAL KONG MANA-
ANAK, AND AN NEW
YEAR'S RESOLUTION
NYO, SIGA NGA?

WHA, TUMULONG
SA GAWING
BANGS?

AND PAU!

SAHOD-OLD
LAPID-OLD

YAS, MANG-ARAL
NANG MAS
MABUTI!

NO-HUM.

TUMULONG
SA KAPPA!

SO-SITING
MAGSIN
TUNGAT
BAY?

O'S'BO
T'S'BO

HATE
SAYON!

HATE SAYON!
EVEN MORE,
LOVE GOD
EVEN BETTER!

BEN BY DANIEL SHE-TON

IT'S
DECEMBER
THIRTY FIRST!
YEEHAAA!

TIME TO PARTY!
TIME TO
CELEBRATE!

YIPPEEE!

WHAT'RE
YOU DOING?

TAKING A NAP
SO I CAN STAY UP
FIRST MIDNIGHT TO
WATCH IT ALL ON
TV.

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS

1 18-wheeler
5 Hot tub
8 Clever
14 Bit
15 Flea
16 Jnskilled
laborer
17 Something old
20 Follow in order
21 Dilatory
22 English county
23 Roh woo of
Korea
25 Karamazov
brother
27 Something new
35 Actress Balin
38 Order to shut
up
37 Staircase pool
38 With more care
41 Hogged the
mirror
43 "Sesame
Street" Muppet
44 Before now
45 Beth's mother
46 Something
borrowed
51 Hurry-burry
52 Stretch of time
53 Crazily
57 Grow weary
59 Colossal
63 Something blue
66 Like some
skates
67 Silly Caesar
68 Latin being
69 Thed out
70 Ml. raining
course
71 Ovario the
mothering

DOWN

1 All there
2 Berkshire
school
3 Sphagnum
4 Credit to a
cause
5 Lanka
6 Kitchen utensil
7 Art of fishing
8 Big name in
mutual funds
9 polio
10 Music genre

By Stanley B. Whitten
Highwood, IL 12/31/07

Saturday's Puzzle Solved

HEADCHERSEES CST
RAD OACTVE AR
SIAINRJTAR ONA
SDS ACC ULN
MCH OHV OLV TTS
EQUALEDEDEVAAG
PULLEDELEERE
TIT GRIN
AV LOUD
MALA SSES EAT ME
ELCTTS ATSD
TENT ROW HAN
ENE THOGRAPHS
RCA SCHOLARSHIP
SEL POMASHARDY

12/31/07

44 Italian lover
47 Decayed
48 Comic strip pup
49 Cogito sum
50 Caught red-
handed
53 Came down
54 Lion's do
56 Birds in bars

58 Contract in
wrinkles
59 the Red
60 Besides
61 Political
cartoonist
62 Clan chart
64 United
65 Today's LPs

HOROSCOPE

YOU BORN TODAY: You truly appreciate beauty in the world. You have artistic sensibilities, and whatever you do, you do carefully. You need harmony and unity in your surroundings. You like a peaceful environment and rarely rock the boat. Most of you have excellent taste. Your year ahead might be one of the best years of your life. Dream big!

Birthday at: Anthony Hopkins, actor; George Thorogood, musician; Ben Kingsley, actor.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): With the Moon opposite your sign today, you have to go more than halfway when dealing with others. Simply be prepared to do this. It's no big deal.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): You feel orderly and disciplined today. This is a good way to end the year. Tidy up loose details so that you can begin your new year as cleanly as possible.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Make plans to party and have fun with friends. You're in a flirtatious mood. You want to have a good time. Enjoy playful activities with children.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Devote attention to home, family and especially parents today. There are domestic details you have to attend to. You also might want to entertain at home.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): This is a busy day for you. Discussions with siblings are important. Short trips, errands and shopping are important. Clean up loose details so that you can start your new year fresh!

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Attend to banking and financial matters today. Make friends with your bank account. Pay some bills. You want to start your new year as debt-free as possible.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): The Moon is in your sign today, and this brings you a little bit of extra good luck. It's a wonderful way to get ready for the new year!

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Try to take a breather today. This has been a busy month for you. Discussions with siblings and relatives are significant. You want to tell someone something.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Discussions with friends, especially female friends, will be warm and friendly today. Someone might need to confide something in you. Be ready to offer a sympathetic shoulder.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): You likely will call attention to yourself today, perhaps inadvertently. It might even be something like a public quarrel. (Oops.) Be aware of your behavior.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): You're interested in people from other countries or different cultures today. You're keen to learn something new. Someone might say something that surprises you because it's sort of weird.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Be patient with others if their values are not the same as yours. The truth is that all people are more alike than they are not. (Everybody wants to be happy; nobody wants to suffer.)

CONCEPTIS SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku By Dave Green

4	6		7		3	2	
5	8		2		9	7	
			5	9			
		6	2			8	
	1	5			3	2	
	3			9	7		
				4	2		
6	2		3			1	5
9	4		1			6	8

Difficulty Level ★

HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

7	2	3	6	4	1	9	8	5
6	5	4	3	8	9	7	1	2
8	9	1	5	7	2	3	6	4
2	6	9	1	5	4	8	3	7
3	7	5	9	6	8	2	4	1
4	1	8	2	3	7	6	5	9
5	8	2	4	9	3	1	7	6
9	4	7	8	1	6	5	2	3
1	3	6	7	2	5	4	9	8

Difficulty Level ★★★★★

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Non-stop music tonight at Eastwood

EASTWOOD CITY'S "NEW Year's Countdown to 2008" tonight features The Members playing 1970s rock 'n' roll at 6

p.m., The Bloomfields interpreting 1960s golden hits at 7:15 p.m., Richard Poon singing 1950s classics at 8 p.m.,

Lala and her brand of alternative rock at 10 p.m.; and The Rage Band's 1980s new wave sounds at 11:30 p.m.

The countdown with fireworks display and laser lights show is set at 12 midnight, followed by a street party with the band Brigada and DJ Vhong's samba and house music.

All shows will be held at the Eastwood City Centre, Plaza in Libis, Quezon City.

Nonoy Lopez, Hyperbeat at Manila Pen

The Lobby New Year's Eve Gala Ball and Dinner tonight at the Manila Peninsula hotel will have Nonoy Lopez and his Band along with Hyperbeat from 10 p.m. to 3 a.m.

Call 8872888 or 8123456.

Tribe of Levi at Bellevue

Tribe of Levi will play pop, R&B and dance music at the New Year's Eve countdown tonight at the 20/20 bar of Bellevue Hotel, Alabang.

Opera at Hyatt Manila

The Philippine Opera Company, featuring classically trained talents dubbed The Three Waiters, Three Tenors and Opera Belles, performs tonight at the Hyatt Hotel and Casino Manila. Call 2451234.

Livewire in Boracay

The Livewire band plays tonight at Discovery Shores, Boracay. Call (036) 2884500.

SHOW TIME

'Evening with the Masters'

Pianist Euelie Grace

Viaje, a music conservatory scholar in Vienna, interprets Chopin, Haydn, Beethoven and Schubert, among others in the classical concert "An Evening with the Masters" on Jan. 12, 3 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. at the Word Community Church, 352 Capt. Henry Javier St., Brgy. Oranbo, Pasig City (near Ultra and Vale Verde Country Club). Call 910-0777 (office hours), 0917-8291526 (Wina) and 0917-5309623 (Carol).



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TRIBE of Levi



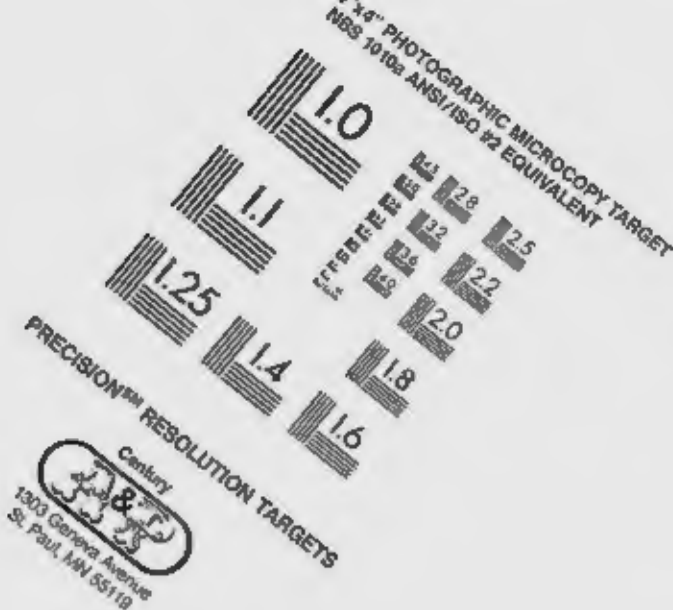
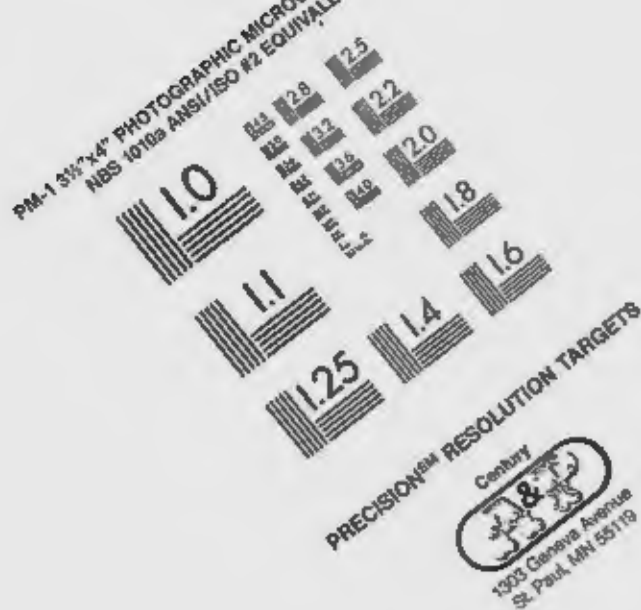
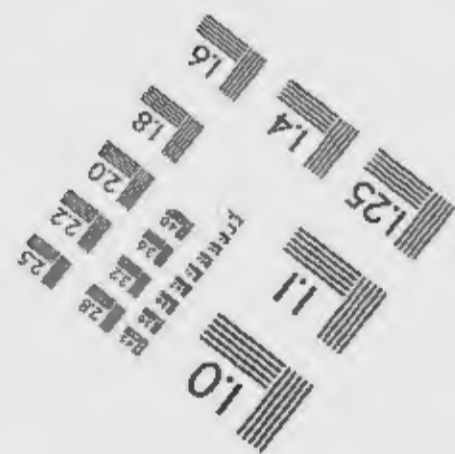
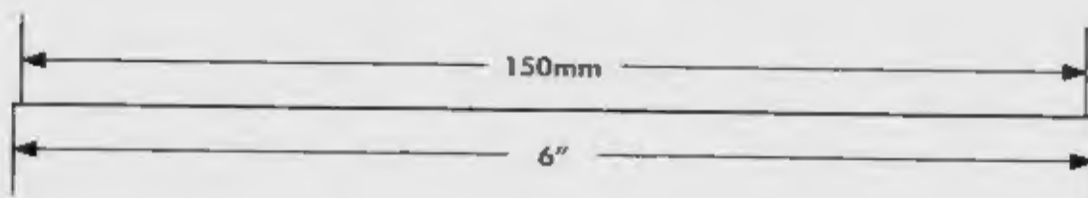
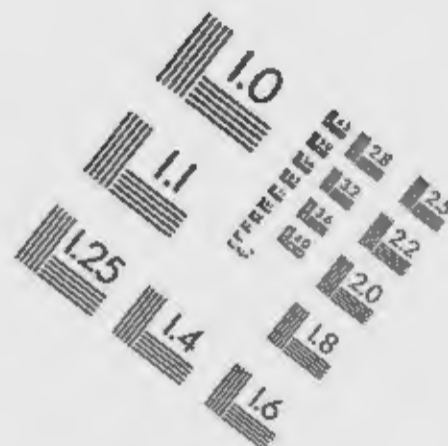
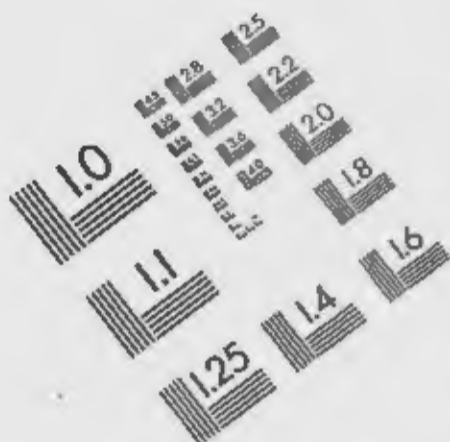
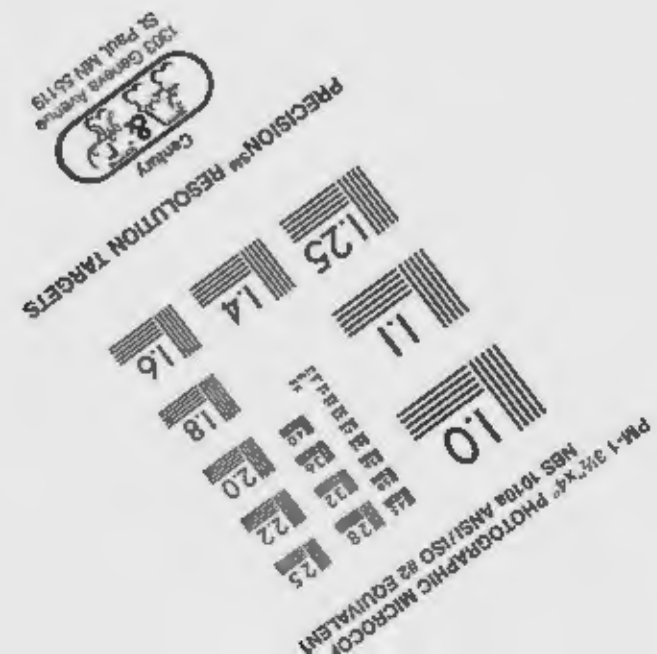
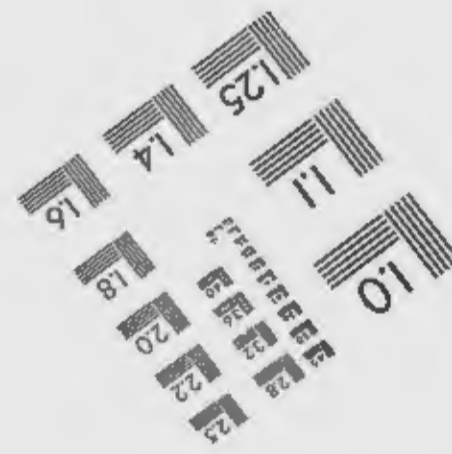
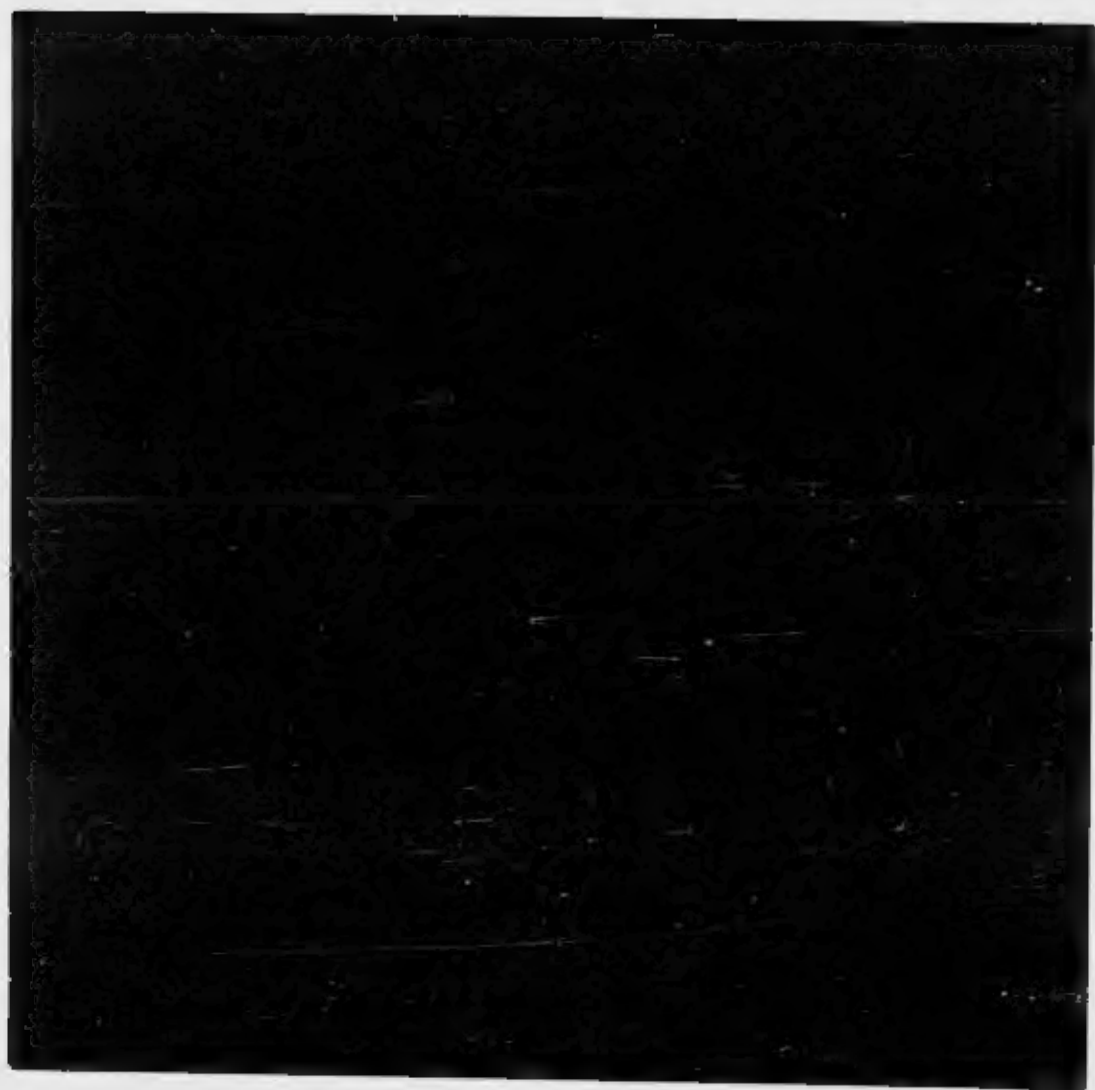


IMAGE EVALUATION
TEST TARGET (MT-3)



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**PHILIPPINE
DAILY INQUIRER
MANILA, PHILIPPINES**

**DECEMBER
16 THRU 31
2007**

REEL 419

END

PLEASE REWIND